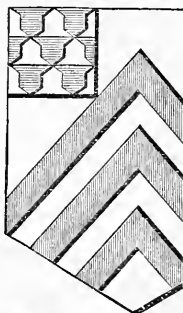




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Hugh Hornby

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THE  
RING AND THE BOOK.

BY

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*IN FOUR VOLUMES.*

VOL. III.

SECOND EDITION

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., LONDON.

1872.

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THE  
RING AND THE BOOK.

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VII.

POMPILIA.

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,  
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks ;  
'T is writ so in the church's register,  
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names  
At length, so many names for one poor child,                   5  
—Francesca Canilla Vittoria Angela  
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable !  
Also 't is writ that I was married there  
Four years ago : and they will add, I hope,  
When they insert my death, a word or two,—                   10

Omitting all about the mode of death,—  
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,  
That I had been a mother of a son  
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace  
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have ; 15  
Because the boy was born at, so baptized  
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church :  
A pretty church, I say no word against,  
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems  
My own particular place, I always say. 20  
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high  
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,  
With half his body rushing from the wall,  
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—  
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door) 25  
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,  
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.  
And they should add, to have my life complete,  
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—  
Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar 30  
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me  
Of Curate Ottoboni : he it was

---

Baptized me : he remembers my whole life  
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things 35  
I know are true,—will you remember them ?  
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,  
To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,  
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—  
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night. 40

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,  
—Better than born, baptized and hid away  
Before this happened, safe from being hurt !  
That had been sin God could not well forgive :  
He was too young to smile and save himself. 45  
When they took, two days after he was born,  
My babe away from me to be baptized  
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—  
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,  
Said “ Why take on so ? where is the great loss ? 50  
“ These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,  
“ Only begin to smile at the month’s end ;

“ He would not know you, if you kept him here,  
“ Sooner than that ; so, spend three merry weeks  
“ Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout, 55  
“ And then I bring him back to be your own,  
“ And both of you may steal to—we know where !”  
The month—there wants of it two weeks this day !  
Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock  
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she— 60  
Come to say “ Since he smiles before the time,  
“ Why should I cheat you out of one good hour ?  
“ Back I have brought him ; speak to him and judge !”  
Now I shall never see him ; what is worse,  
When he grows up and gets to be my age, 65  
He will seem hardly more than a great boy ;  
And if he asks “ What was my mother like ?”  
People may answer “ Like girls of seventeen ”—  
And how can he but think of this and that,  
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush 70  
When he regards them as such boys may do ?  
Therefore I wish some one will please to say  
I looked already old though I was young ;  
Do I not . . say, if you are by to speak . .

---

Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least, 75  
Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,  
Than the poor Virgin that I used to know  
At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—  
The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—  
Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more : 80  
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write !  
Such could write what their son should read in time,  
Had they a whole day to live out like me.  
Also my name is not a common name, 85  
“Pompilia,” and may help to keep apart  
A little the thing I am from what girls are.  
But then how far away, how hard to find  
Will anything about me have become,  
Even if the boy bethink himself and ask ! 90  
No father that he ever knew at all,  
Nor ever had—no, never had, I say !—  
That is the truth,—nor any mother left,  
Out of the little two weeks that she lived,  
Fit for such memory as might assist : 95

As good too as no family, no name,  
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,  
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems  
They must not be my parents any more.  
That is why something put it in my head 100  
To call the boy "Gaetano"—no old name  
For sorrow's sake ; I looked up to the sky  
And took a new saint to begin anew.

One who has only been made saint—how long?  
Twenty-five years : so, carefuller, perhaps, 105  
To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,  
Tired out by this time,—see my own five saints !

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard  
The history of me as what someone dreamed,  
And get to disbelieve it at the last : 110  
Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,  
Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—  
Just in four days too ! All the seventeen years,  
Not once did a suspicion visit me  
How very different a lot is mine 115  
From any other woman's in the world.

The reason must be, 't was by step and step  
 It got to grow so terrible and strange.  
 These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,  
 Into my neighbourhood and privacy, 120  
 Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay ;  
 And I was found familiarised with fear,  
 When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried  
 " Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,  
 " How comes that arm of yours about a wolf? 125  
 " And the soft length,—lies in and out your feet  
 " And laps you round the knee,—a snake it is !"  
 And so on.

Well, and they are right enough,  
 By the torch they hold up now : for first, observe, 130  
 I never had a father,—no, nor yet  
 A mother : my own boy can say at least  
 " I had a mother whom I kept two weeks !"  
 Not I, who little used to doubt . . . *I* doubt  
 Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth? 135  
 They loved me always as I love my babe  
 (—Nearly so, that is—quite so could not be—)

Did for me all I meant to do for him,  
 Till one surprising day, three years ago,  
 They both declared, at Rome, before some judge 140  
 In some court where the people flocked to hear,  
 That really I had never been their child,  
 Was a mere castaway, the careless crime  
 Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much  
 Of a woman known too well,—little to these, 145  
 Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood :  
 What then to Pietro and Violante, both  
 No more my relatives than you or you?  
 Nothing to them ! You know what they declared.

So with my husband,—just such a surprise, 150  
 Such a mistake, in that relationship !  
 Everyone says that husbands love their wives,  
 Guard them and guide them, give them happiness ;  
 'T is duty, law, pleasure, religion : well,  
 You see how much of this comes true in mine ! 155  
 People indeed would fain have somehow proved  
 He was no husband : but he did not hear,  
 Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.



Then there is . . . only let me name one more !

There is the friend,—men will not ask about, 160

But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,

And think my lover, most surprise of all !

Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,

Giuseppe Caponsacchi : a priest—love,

And love me ! Well, yet people think he did. 165

I am married, he has taken priestly vows,

They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,

“ Yes, how he loves you ! ” “ That was love ”—they  
say,

When anything is answered that they ask :

Or else “ No wonder you love him ”—they say 170

Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame—

As if we neither of us lacked excuse,

And anyhow are punished to the full,

And downright love atones for everything !

Nay, I heard read out in the public court 175

Before the judge, in presence of my friends,

Letters 't was said the priest had sent to me,

And other letters sent him by myself,

We being lovers !

Listen what this is like ! 180

When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that 's  
 Violante, you must let me call her so  
 Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word, . . .  
 She brought a neighbour's child of my own age  
 To play with me of rainy afternoons ; 185  
 And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,  
 We two agreed to find each other out  
 Among the figures. " Tisbe, that is you,  
 " With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,  
 " Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf 190  
 " Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back :  
 " Call off your hound and leave the stag alone !"  
 " —And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves  
 " Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,  
 " And all the rest of you so brown and rough : 195  
 " Why is it you are turned a sort of tree ?"  
 You know the figures never were ourselves  
 Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—  
 As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—  
 Looks old, fantastic and impossible : 200  
 I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.

—Even to my babe ! I thought, when he was born,  
Something began for once that would not end,  
Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay  
For evermore, eternally quite mine. 205

Well, so he is,—but yet they bore him off,  
The third day, lest my husband should lay traps  
And catch him, and by means of him catch me.  
Since they have saved him so, it was well done :  
Yet thence comes such confusion of what was 210

With what will be,—that late seems long ago,  
And, what years should bring round, already come,  
Till even he withdraws into a dream  
As the rest do : I fancy him grown great,  
Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me, 215  
Frowns with the others “ Poor imprudent child !

“ Why did you venture out of the safe street ?  
“ Why go so far from help to that lone house ?  
“ Why open at the whisper and the knock ? ”

Six days ago when it was New Year's-day, 220  
We bent above the fire and talked of him,  
What he should do when he was grown and great.

Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm  
I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair  
And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at last, 225  
“Pompilia’s march from bed to board is made,  
“Pompilia back again and with a babe,  
“Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk!”  
Then we all wished each other more New Years.  
Pietro began to scheme—“Our cause is gained; 230  
“The law is stronger than a wicked man :  
“Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours !  
“We will avoid the city, tempt no more  
“The greedy ones by feasting and parade,—  
“Live at the other villa, we know where, 235  
“Still farther off, and we can watch the babe  
“Grow fast in the good air ; and wood is cheap  
“And wine sincere outside the city gate.  
“I still have two or three old friends will grope  
“Their way along the mere half-mile of road, 240  
“With staff and lantern on a moonless night  
“When one needs talk : they ’ll find me, never fear,  
“And I ’ll find them a flask of the old sort yet !”  
Violante said “You chatter like a crow :

“Pompilia tires o’ the tattle, and shall to bed : 245

“Do not too much the first day,—somewhat more

“To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape

“And hood and coat ! I have spun wool enough.”

Oh what a happy friendly eve was that !

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went— 250

He was so happy and would talk so much,

Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth

Sight-seeing in the cold,—“So much to see

“I’ the churches ! Swathe your throat three times !”

she cried,

“And, above all, beware the slippery ways, 255

“And bring us all the news by supper-time !”

He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,

Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,

Rolled a great log upon the ash o’ the hearth,

And bade Violante treat us to a flask, 260

Because he had obeyed her faithfully,

Gone sight-see through the seven, and found no church

To his mind like San Giovanni—“There ’s the fold,

“And all the sheep together, big as cats !

“ And such a shepherd, half the size of life,                    265  
“ Starts up and hears the angel ”—when, at the  
    door,  
A tap : we started up : you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know ;  
Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes  
Such revenge lawful.    Certainly she erred—                    270  
Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise?—  
In telling that first falsehood, buying me  
From my poor faulty mother at a price,  
To pass off upon Pietro as his child.  
If one should take my babe, give him a name,                    275  
Say he was not Gaetano and my own,  
But that some other woman made his mouth  
And hands and feet,—how very false were that !  
No good could come of that ; and all harm did.  
Yet if a stranger were to represent                                280  
“ Needs must you either give your babe to me  
“ And let me call him mine for evermore,  
“ Or let your husband get him ”—ah, my God,  
That were a trial I refuse to face !

Well, just so here: it proved wrong but seemed right  
 To poor Violante—for there lay, she said, 286  
 My poor real dying mother in her rags,  
 Who put me from her with the life and all,  
 Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,  
 To die the easier by what price I fetched— 290  
 Also (I hope) because I should be spared  
 Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped?  
 My father,—he was no one, any one,—  
 The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he who came,  
 Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way, 295  
 And left no trace to track by; there remained  
 Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,  
 To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing  
 She could make happy, be made happy with,  
 This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat? 300

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.  
 It is not that, because a bud is born  
 At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,  
 We ought to pluck and put it out of reach  
 On the oak-tree top,—say, “There the bud belongs!”

She thought, moreover, real lies were—lies told 306  
For harm's sake ; whereas this had good at heart,  
Good for my mother, good for me, and good  
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,  
And needed one to make his life of use, 310  
Receive his house and land when he should die.  
Wrong, wrong and always wrong ! how plainly wrong !  
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,  
All the same at her heart,—this falsehood hatched,  
She could not let it go nor keep it fast. 315  
She told me so,—the first time I was found  
Locked in her arms once more after the pain,  
When the nuns let me leave them and go home,  
And both of us cried all the cares away,—  
This it was set her on to make amends, 320  
This brought about the marriage—simply this !  
Do let me speak for her you blame so much !  
When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,  
Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,  
So, came and made a speech to ask my hand 325  
For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight  
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,



Fancied she saw God's very finger point,  
 Designate just the time for planting me,  
 (The wild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear) 330  
 In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,  
 And get to be the thing I called myself:  
 For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,  
 And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,  
 Should in a husband have a husband now, 335  
 Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,  
 —All truth and no confusion any more.  
 I know she meant all good to me, all pain  
 To herself,—since how could it be aught but pain,  
 To give me up, so, from her very breast, 340  
 The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,  
 She had got used to feel for and find fixed?  
 She meant well: has it been so ill i' the main?  
 That is but fair to ask: one cannot judge  
 Of what has been the ill or well of life, 345  
 The day that one is dying,—sorrows change  
 Into not altogether sorrow-like;  
 I do see strangeness but scarce misery,  
 Now it is over, and no danger more.



---

Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,  
To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years  
Were, each day, happy as the day was long :  
This may have made the change too terrible. 375  
I know that when Violante told me first  
The cavalier,—she meant to bring next morn,  
Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand,—  
Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve  
And marry me,—which over, we should go 380  
Home both of us without him as before,  
And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,  
Such being the correct way with girl-brides,  
From whom one word would make a father blush,—  
I know, I say, that when she told me this, 385  
—Well, I no more saw sense in what she said  
Than a lamb does in people clipping wool ;  
Only lay down and let myself be clipped.  
And when next day the cavalier who came  
(Tisbe had told me that the slim young man 390  
With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword

Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,  
 Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)  
 When he proved Guido Franceschini,—old  
 And nothing like so tall as I myself, 395  
 Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,  
 Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,  
 He called an owl and used for catching birds,—  
 And when he took my hand and made a smile—  
 Why, the uncomfortableness of it all 400  
 Seemed hardly more important in the case  
 Than,—when one gives you, say, a coin to spend,—  
 Its newness or its oldness ; if the piece  
 Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,  
 No matter whether you get grime or glare ! 405  
 Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.  
 Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece  
 Would purchase me the praise of those I loved :  
 About what else should I concern myself ?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant, 410  
 I supposed this or any man would serve,  
 No whit the worse for being so uncouth :

For I was ill once and a doctor came  
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,  
Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword, 415  
And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,  
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere !—  
Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,  
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two  
Of a black bitter something,—I was cured ! 420  
What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face ?  
It was the physic beautified the man,  
Master Malpichi,—never met his match  
In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the same !

However, I was hurried through a storm, 425  
Next dark eve of December's dearest day—  
How it rained !—through our street and the Lion's-mouth  
And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round, covered close,  
I was like something strange or contraband,—  
Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle, 430  
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,  
I fancied we were come to see a corpse  
Before the altar which she pulled me toward.

There we found waiting an unpleasant priest  
Who proved the brother, not our parish friend, 435  
But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,  
Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then  
I heard the heavy church-door lock out help  
Behind us : for the customary warmth,  
Two tapers shivered on the altar. "Quick— 440  
"Lose no time!"—cried the priest. And straightway  
down

From . . . what's behind the altar where he hid—  
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,  
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I  
O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book, 445  
Read here and there, made me say that and this,  
And after, told me I was now a wife,  
Honoured indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,  
And therefore turned he water into wine,  
To show I should obey my spouse like Christ. 450  
Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,  
And I, silent and scared, got down again  
And joined my mother who was weeping now.  
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,

And both of us on tiptoe found our way 455

To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.

When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,

All things looked better. At our own house-door,

Violante whispered "No one syllable

"To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!" 460

"—Well treated to a wetting, draggie-tails!"

Laughed Pietro as he opened—"Very near

"You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea

"To carry off from roost old dove and young,

"Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite! 465

"What do these priests mean, praying folk to death

"On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close

"To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"

Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,

Madonna saved me from immodest speech, 470

I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,

Of Guido—"Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:

"Nothing is changed however, wine is wine

"And water only water in our house. 475

“ Nor did I see that ugly doctor since  
“ The cure of the illness : just as I was cured,  
“ I am married,—neither scarecrow will return.”

Three weeks, I chuckled—“ How would Giulia stare,  
“ And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright, 480  
“ Were it not impudent for brides to talk !”—  
Until one morning, as I sat and sang  
At the broidery-frame alone i' the chamber,—loud  
Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,  
And my name, “ Guido,” “ Paolo,” flung like stones 485  
From each to the other ! In I ran to see.  
There stood the very Guido and the priest  
With sly face,—formal but nowise afraid,—  
While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce  
Able to stutter out his wrath in words ; 490  
And this it was that made my mother sob,  
As he reproached her—“ You have murdered us,  
“ Me and yourself and this our child beside !”  
Then Guido interposed “ Murdered or not,  
“ Be it enough your child is now my wife ! 495  
“ I claim and come to take her.” Paul put in,



- “ Consider—kinsman, dare I term you so?—  
 “ What is the good of your sagacity  
 “ Except to counsel in a strait like this?  
 “ I guarantee the parties man and wife 500  
 “ Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.  
 “ May spilt milk be put back within the bowl—  
 “ The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look  
 “ For counsel to, you fittest will advise!  
 “ Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good.  
 “ Better we down on knees and scrub the floor, 506  
 “ Than sigh, ‘ the waste would make a syllabub!’  
 “ Help us so turn disaster to account,  
 “ So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace  
 “ The bride with favour from the very first, 510  
 “ Not begin marriage an embittered man!”  
 He smiled,—the game so wholly in his hands!  
 While fast and faster sobbed Violante—“ Ay,  
 “ All of us murdered, past averting now!  
 “ O my sin, O my secret!” and such like. 515

Then I began to half surmise the truth ;  
 Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,

False, and my mother was to blame, and I  
 To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed:  
 I was the chattel that had caused a crime. 520

I stood mute,—those who tangled must untie  
 The embroilment. Pietro cried “Withdraw, my child!

“She is not helpful to the sacrifice

“At this stage,—do you want the victim by

“While you discuss the value of her blood? 525

“For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:

“Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!”

I did go and was praying God, when came  
 Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,  
 But movement on her mouth for make-believe 530  
 Matters were somehow getting right again.

She bade me sit down by her side and hear.

“You are too young and cannot understand,

“Nor did your father understand at first.

“I wished to benefit all three of us, 535

“And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,

“I tried to have my way at unaware—

“Obtained him the advantage he refused.

- “ As if I put before him wholesome food  
“ Instead of broken victual,—he finds change 540  
“ I’ the viands, never cares to reason why,  
“ But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate  
“ From window, scandalize the neighbourhood,  
“ Even while he smacks his lips,—men’s way, my child !  
“ But either you have prayed him unpervise 545  
“ Or I have talked him back into his wits :  
“ And Paolo was a help in time of need,—  
“ Guido, not much—my child, the way of men !  
“ A priest is more a woman than a man,  
“ And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short, 550  
“ Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says ;  
“ My scheme was worth attempting : and bears fruit,  
“ Gives you a husband and a noble name,  
“ A palace and no end of pleasant things.  
“ What do you care about a handsome youth? 555  
“ They are so volatile, and tease their wives !  
“ This is the kind of man to keep the house.  
“ We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that’s all :  
“ For ’t is arranged we never separate,  
“ Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints 560

" Of you that colour eve to match with morn.  
 " In good or ill, we share and share alike,  
 " And cast our lots into a common lap,  
 " And all three die together as we lived !  
 " Only, at Arezzo,—that 's a Tuscan town, 565  
 " Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,  
 " But older far and finer much, say folks,—  
 " In a great palace where you will be queen,  
 " Know the Archbishop and the Governor,  
 " And we see homage done you ere we die. 570  
 " Therefore, be good and pardon !"—" Pardon what ?  
 " You know things, I am very ignorant :  
 " All is right if you only will not cry !"

And so an end ! Because a blank begins  
 From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,  
 And took me back to where my father leaned 575  
 Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,  
 As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox  
 That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—  
 While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whiles 580  
 With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—

And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife  
 "Until death part you!"

All since is one blank,  
 Over and ended; a terrific dream. 585

It is the good of dreams—so soon they go!  
 Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may—  
 Cry, "The dread thing will never from my thoughts!"  
 Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,  
 Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell 590  
 Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;  
 And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,  
 Where is the harm o' the horror? Gone! So here.  
 I know I wake,—but from what? Blank, I say!  
 This is the note of evil: for good lasts. 595  
 Even when Don Celestine bade "Search and find!"  
 "For your soul's sake, remember what is past,  
 "The better to forgive it,"—all in vain!  
 What was fast getting indistinct before,  
 Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps, 600  
 Between that first calm and this last, four years  
 Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you know.

I am held up, amid the nothingness,  
By one or two truths only—thence I hang,  
And there I live,—the rest is death or dream, 605  
All but those points of my support. I think  
Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square  
O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House :  
There was a foreigner had trained a goat,  
A shuddering white woman of a beast, 610  
To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks  
Put close, which gave the creature room enough :  
When she was settled there he, one by one,  
Took away all the sticks, left just the four  
Whereon the little hoofs did really rest, 615  
There she kept firm, all underneath was air.  
So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,  
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,  
Some hand would interpose and save me—hand  
Which proved to be my friend's hand : and,—best bliss,—  
That fancy which began so faint at first, 621  
That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,  
Which I perceive was promise of my child,  
The light his unborn face sent long before,—

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God's way of breaking the good news to flesh. 625  
 That is all left now of those four bad years.  
 Don Celestine urged " But remember more !  
 " Other men's faults may help me find your own.  
 " I need the cruelty exposed, explained,  
 " Or how can I advise you to forgive?" 630  
 He thought I could not properly forgive  
 Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is true :  
 For, bringing back reluctantly to mind  
 My husband's treatment of me,—by a light  
 That 's later than my life-time, I review 635  
 And comprehend much and imagine more,  
 And have but little to forgive at last.  
 For now,—be fair and say,—is it not true  
 He was ill-used and cheated of his hope  
 To get enriched by marriage? Marriage gave 640  
 Me and no money, broke the compact so :  
 He had a right to ask me on those terms,  
 As Pietro and Violante to declare  
 They would not give me : so the bargain stood :  
 They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved, 645  
 Became unkind with me to punish them.

They said 't was he began deception first,  
 Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,  
 Kept promise : what of that, suppose it were ?  
 Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate 650  
 For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,  
 And never let our ears have done with noise ?  
 Then my poor parents took the violent way  
 To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,  
 Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind ! 655  
 As I myself was, that is sure, who else  
 Had understood the mystery : for his wife  
 Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.  
 It seems as if I might have interposed,  
 Blunted the edge of their resentment so, 660  
 Since he vexed me because they first vexed him ;  
 “ I will entreat them to desist, submit,  
 “ Give him the money and be poor in peace,—  
 “ Certainly not go tell the world : perhaps  
 “ He will grow quiet with his gains.” 665

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well !



But then you have to see first : I was blind.  
That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,  
The indirect, the unapproved of God : 670  
You cannot find their author's end and aim,  
Not even to substitute your good for bad,  
Your open for the irregular ; you stand  
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep  
That miss a man's mind ; anger him just twice 675  
By trial at repairing the first fault.  
Thus, when he blamed me, " You are a coquette,  
" A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,  
" You look love-lures at theatre and church,  
" In walk, at window !" —that, I knew, was false : 680  
But why he charged me falsely, whither sought  
To drive me by such charge,—how could I know ?  
So, unaware, I only made things worse.  
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,  
Window, church, theatre, for good and all, 685  
As if he had been in earnest : that, you know,  
Was nothing like the object of his charge.  
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate  
The priest, whose name she read when she would read

Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear 690  
Though I could read no word of,—he should cease  
Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,  
Cease from so much as even pass the street  
Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance  
I was just thwarting Guido's true intent ; 695  
Which was, to bring about a wicked change  
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man  
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,  
Till both of us were taken in a crime.  
He ought not to have wished me thus act lies, 700  
Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—  
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain  
It follows,—if I fell into such fault,  
He also may have overreached the mark,  
Made mistake, by perversity of brain, 705  
I' the whole sad strange plot, the grotesque intrigue  
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,  
Be other man and woman than we were !  
Think it out, you who have the time ! for me,—  
I cannot say less ; more I will not say. 710  
Leave it to God to cover and undo !

Only, my dulness should not prove too much !  
—Not prove that in a certain other point  
Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,  
If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,— 715  
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak !  
Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent  
A way to make my husband's favour come.  
That is true : I was firm, withstood, refused . . .  
—Women as you are, how can I find the words? 720

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed  
I had no right to give nor he to take ;  
We being in estrangement, soul from soul :  
Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,  
Inquiring into privacies of life, 725  
—Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)  
Nowise entitled to exemption there.  
Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed  
Were the injunction “ Since your husband bids,  
“ Swallow the burning coal he proffers you !” 730  
But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice  
Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know !—

Now I have got to die and see things clear.  
Remember I was barely twelve years old—  
A child at marriage : I was let alone 735  
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still  
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found  
First . . . but I need not think of that again—  
Over and ended ! Try and take the sense  
Of what I signify, if it must be so. 740  
After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,  
Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty  
Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,  
“ We have been man and wife six months almost :  
“ How long is this your comedy to last ? 745  
“ Go this night to my chamber, not your own ! ”  
At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—  
And gain the Archbishop's house—he stands for God—  
And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,  
Praying him hinder what my estranged soul 750  
Refused to bear, though patient of the rest :  
“ Place me within a convent,” I implored—  
“ Let me henceforward lead the virgin life  
“ You praise in Her you bid me imitate ! ”

What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance? 755  
 " Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar  
 " Virginitv,—'t is virtue or 't is vice.  
 " That which was glory in the Mother of God  
 " Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve  
 " Created to be mother of mankind. 760  
 " Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech  
 " ' Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth '—  
 " Pouted ' But I choose rather to remain  
 " ' Single '—why, she had spared herself forthwith  
 " Further probation by the apple and snake, 765  
 " Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—  
 " If motherhood be qualified impure,  
 " I catch you making God command Eve sin!  
 " —A blasphemy so like these Molinists',  
 " I must suspect you dip into their books." 770  
 Then he pursued "'T was in your covenant!"

No! There my husband never used deceit.

He never did by speech nor act imply

" Because of our souls' yearning that we meet

" And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine

“ Wear and impress, and make their visible selves, 776

“ —All which means, for the love of you and me,

“ Let us become one flesh, being one soul !”

He only stipulated for the wealth ;

Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain— 780

Dreadfully honest also—“ Since our souls

“ Stand each from each, a whole world’s width between,

“ Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach

“ And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn !”—

Why, in God’s name, for Guido’s soul’s own sake 785

Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say,

I did resist ; would I had overcome !

My heart died out at the Archbishop’s smile ;

—It seemed so stale and worn a way o’ the world, 789

As though ’t were nature frowning—“ Here is Spring,

“ The sun shines as he shone at Adam’s fall,

“ The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere :

“ What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth

“ Because you rather fancy snow than flowers ?”

Something in this style he began with me. 795

Last he said, savagely for a good man,

- “ This explains why you call your husband harsh,  
“ Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God’s Bread !  
“ The poor Count has to manage a mere child  
“ Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things 800  
“ Their duty was and privilege to teach,—  
“ Goodwives’ instruction, gossips’ lore : they laugh  
“ And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me !”  
Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.  
“ I am not ignorant,—know what I say, 805  
“ Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.  
“ Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.  
“ I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest  
“ My husband’s brother, Canon Girolamo—  
“ Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love 810  
“ Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,  
“ For he solicits me and says he loves,  
“ The idle young priest with nought else to do.  
“ My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.  
“ Is it your counsel I bear this beside ?” 815  
“ —More scandal, and against a priest this time !  
“ What, ’t is the Canon now ?”—less snappishly—  
“ Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,

- " The rod were too advanced a punishment !  
 " Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable ! 820  
 " ' Without a parable spake He not to them.'  
 " There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,  
 " Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May :  
 " And, to the tree, said . . either the spirit o' the fig,  
 " Or, if we bring in men, the gardener, 825  
 " Archbishop of the orchard—had I time  
 " To try o' the two which fits in best : indeed  
 " It might be the Creator's self, but then  
 " The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,—  
 " Well, anyhow, one with authority said 830  
 " ' Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—  
 " ' The bird whereof thou art a perquisite !'  
 " ' Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,  
 " ' I much prefer to keep my pulp myself :  
 " ' He may go breakfastless and dinnerless, 835  
 " ' Supperless of one crimson seed, for me !'  
 " So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.  
 " He flew off, left her,—did the natural lord,—  
 " And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps  
 " Found her out. feasted on her to the shuck : 840



" Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite !  
 " The moral,—fools elude their proper lot,  
 " Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.  
 " Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick !  
 " Which if his Canon brother chance to see, 845  
 " He will the sooner back to book again."

So, home I did go ; so, the worst befell :  
 So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,  
 And hardly that, and certainly no more.  
 For, miserable consequence to me, 850  
 My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at all,  
 His brother's boldness grew effrontery soon,  
 And my last stay and comfort in myself  
 Was forced from me : henceforth I looked to God  
 Only, nor cared my desecrated soul 855  
 Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.  
 God's glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,  
 Was witness why all lights were quenched inside :  
 Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.

So, when I made the effort, saved myself, 860

They said—"No care to save appearance here!  
 "How cynic,—when, how wanton, were enough!"  
 —Adding, it all came of my mother's life—  
 My own real mother, whom I never knew,  
 Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong) 865  
 Through being all her life, not my four years,  
 At mercy of the hateful,—every beast  
 O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,  
 Trample the silver into mud so murk  
 Heaven could not find itself reflected there,— 870  
 Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy pool,  
 "Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness  
 "To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank!"

Well, since she had to bear this brand—let me!  
 The rather do I understand her now,— 875  
 From my experience of what hate calls love,—  
 Much love might be in what their love called hate.  
 If she sold . . what they call, sold . . me her child—  
 I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart  
 That I at least might try be good and pure, 880  
 Begin to live untempted, not go doomed

And done with ere once found in fault, as she.  
Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?  
Why should I trust those that speak ill of you,  
When I mistrust who speaks even well of them? 885  
Why, since all bound to do me good, did harm,  
May not you, seeming as you harmed me most,  
Have meant to do most good—and feed your child  
From bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree  
But drew-back bough from, nor let one fruit fall? 890  
This it was for you sacrificed your babe?  
Gained just this, giving your heart's hope away  
As I might give mine, loving it as you,  
If . . . but that never could be asked of me!

There, enough! I have my support again, 895  
Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,  
Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give  
Outright to God, without a further care,—  
But not to any parent in the world,—  
So to be safe: why is it we repine? 900  
What guardianship were safer could we choose?  
All human plans and projects come to nought,

My life, and what I know of other lives,  
 Prove that : no plan nor project ! God shall care !

And now you are not tired? How patient then 905

All of you,—Oh yes, patient this long while

Listening, and understanding, I am sure !

Four days ago, when I was sound and well

And like to live, no one would understand.

People were kind, but smiled “And what of him, 910

“Your friend, whose tonsure, the rich dark-brown hides?

“There, there !—your lover, do we dream he was?

“A priest too—never were such naughtiness !

“Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,

“After the shy pale lady,—lay so light 915

“For a moment in his arms, the lucky one !”

And so on : wherefore should I blame you much ?

So we are made, such difference in minds,

Such difference too in eyes that see the minds !

That man, you misinterpret and misprise— 920

The glory of his nature, I had thought,

Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth

Through every atom of his act with me :

Yet where I point you, through the chrystal shrine,  
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop, 925  
You all descry a spider in the midst.

One says, "The head of it is plain to see,"  
And one, "They are the feet by which I judge,"  
All say, "Those films were spun by nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God, 930  
Nor think of him again for gratitude.

Yes my last breath shall wholly spend itself  
In one attempt more to disperse the stain,  
The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,  
About a lustrous and pellucid soul : 935

So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,  
And people need assurance in their doubt  
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,  
The weak a saviour and the vile a foe,—  
Let him be present, by the name invoked, 940  
Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi !

There,

Strength comes already with the utterance !

I will remember once more for his sake  
 The sorrow : for he lives and is belied. 945  
 Could he be here, how he would speak for me !

I had been miserable three drear years  
 In that dread palace and lay passive now,  
 When I first learned there could be such a man.  
 Thus it fell : I was at a public play, 950  
 In the last days of Carnival last March,  
 Brought there I knew not why, but now know well.  
 My husband put me where I sat, in front ;  
 Then crouched down, breathed cold through me from  
     behind,  
 Stationed i' the shadow,—none in front could see,— 955  
 I, it was, faced the stranger-throng beneath,  
 The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one stare,  
 Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,  
 Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged  
 “ True life is only love, love only bliss : 960  
 “ I love thee—thee I love ! ” then they embraced.  
 I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls,—  
 Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes,—

My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome  
On wings of music, waft of measured words,— 965  
Set me down there, a happy child again,  
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,  
Hearing my parents praise past festas more,  
And seeing they were old if I was young,  
Yet wondering why they still would end discourse 970  
With “ We must soon go, you abide your time,  
“ And,—might we haply see the proper friend  
“ Throw his arm over you and make you safe ! ”

Sudden I saw him ; into my lap there fell  
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream 975  
And brought me from the air and laid me low,  
As ruined as the soaring bee that 's reached  
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)  
By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay :  
I looked to see who flung them, and I faced 980  
This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.  
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,  
Whoever flung them, his was not the hand,—  
Up rose the round face and good-natured grin

Of one who, in effect, had played the prank, 985  
 From covert close beside the earnest face,—  
 Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.  
 He was my husband's cousin, privileged  
 To throw the thing : the other, silent, grave,  
 Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him. 990

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,  
 " Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee ! "  
 The psalm runs not " I hope, I pray for wings,"—  
 Not " If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast,"—  
 Simply " How good it were to fly and rest, 995  
 " Have hope now, and one day expect content !  
 " How well to do what I shall never do ! "  
 So I said " Had there been a man like that,  
 " To lift me with his strength out of all strife  
 " Into the calm, how I could fly and rest ! 1000  
 " I have a keeper in the garden here  
 " Whose sole employment is to strike me low  
 " If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.  
 " Life means with me successful feigning death,  
 " Lying stone-like, eluding notice so, 1005



“ Forgoing here the turf and there the sky.  
 “ Suppose that man had been instead of this ! ”

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,  
 —Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat—

“ Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard !                    1010  
 “ Because you must be hurt, to look austere  
 “ As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend  
 “ A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close?  
 “ Keep on your knees, do ! Beg her to forgive !  
 “ My cornet battered like a cannon-ball.                    1015  
 “ Good-bye, I ’m gone ! ”—nor waited the reply.

That night at supper, out my husband broke,  
 “ Why was that throwing, that buffoonery ?  
 “ Do you think I am your dupe ? What man would dare  
 “ Throw comfits in a stranger lady’s lap ?                    1020  
 “ ’T was knowledge of you bred such insolence  
 “ In Caponsacchi ; he dared shoot the bolt,  
 “ Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.  
 “ How could you see him this once and no more,  
 “ When he is always haunting hereabout                    1025

" At the street-corner or the palace-side,  
 " Publishing my shame and your impudence ?  
 " You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you think ?  
 " O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick ?"  
 Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust. 1030

All this, now,—being not so strange to me,  
 Used to such misconception day by day  
 And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this time,  
 More quietly than woman should perhaps ;  
 Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue. 1035

Then he said, " Since you play the ignorant,  
 " I shall instruct you. This amour,—commenced  
 " Or finished or midway in act, all 's one,—  
 " 'T is the town-talk ; so my revenge shall be.  
 " Does he presume because he is a priest ? 1040  
 " I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink  
 " His lily-scented cassock through and through,  
 " Next time I catch him underneath your eaves !"

But he had threatened with the sword so oft

And, after all, not kept his promise. All 1045  
I said was, " Let God save the innocent !  
" Moreover, death is far from a bad fate.  
" I shall go pray for you and me, not him ;  
" And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,  
" Life." So, I slept. 1050

There may have elapsed a week,  
When Margherita,—called my waiting-maid,  
Whom it is said my husband found too fair—  
Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,  
Who never once would let the matter rest 1055  
From that night forward, but rang changes still  
On this the thrust and that the shame, and how  
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,  
And what a paragon was this same priest  
She talked about until I stopped my ears,— 1060  
She said, " A week is gone ; you comb your hair,  
" Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,  
" Till night comes round again,—so, waste a week  
" As if your husband menaced you in sport.  
" Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks ? 1065

- " Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man  
 " Who made and sang the rhymes about me once !  
 " For why ? They sent him to the wars next day.  
 " Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend,  
 " Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast,— 1070  
 " The swarth skins of our city in dispute :  
 " For, though he paid me proper compliment,  
 " The Count well knew he was besotted with  
 " Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,  
 " (As all the town knew save my foreigner) 1075  
 " He found and wedded presently,—‘ Why need  
 " ‘ Better revenge ? ’—the Count asked. But what’s here ?  
 " A priest, that does not fight, and cannot wed,  
 " Yet must be dealt with ! If the Count took fire  
 " For the poor pastime of a minute,—me— 1080  
 " What were the conflagration for yourself,  
 " Countess and lady-wife and all the rest ?  
 " The priest will perish ; you will grieve too late :  
 " So shall the city-ladies’ handsomest  
 " Frankest and liberalest gentleman 1085  
 " Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog  
 " Hanging’s too good for. Is there no escape ?

" Were it not simple Christian charity  
 " To warn the priest be on his guard,—save him  
 " Assured death, save yourself from causing it? 1090  
 " I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,  
 " A ring to show for token! Mum's the word!"

I answered, " If you were, as styled, my maid,  
 " I would command you : as you are, you say,  
 " My husband's intimate,—assist his wife 1095  
 " Who can do nothing but entreat ' Be still !'  
 " Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,  
 " Leave help to God as I am forced to do !  
 " There is no other cause, or we should craze,  
 " Seeing such evil with no human cure. 1100  
 " Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,  
 " Can make an angry violent heart subside.  
 " Why should we venture teach Him governance?  
 " Never address me on this subject more !"

Next night she said, " But I went, all the same, 1105  
 " — Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,  
 " And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.

- “ I told him, ‘ Sir, my mistress is a stone :
- “ ‘ Why should you harm her for no good you get ?
- “ ‘ For you do harm her—prowl about our place 1110
- “ ‘ With the Count never distant half the street,
- “ ‘ Lurking at every corner, would you look !
- “ ‘ ’Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.
- “ ‘ Are there not other beauties at your beck ?
- “ ‘ We all know, Donna This and Monna That 1115
- “ ‘ Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze !
- “ ‘ Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold !’
- “ And he—oh, he turned first white and then red,
- “ And then—‘ To her behest I bow myself,
- “ ‘ Whom I love with my body and my soul : 1120
- “ ‘ Only a word i’ the bowing ! See, I write
- “ ‘ One little word, no harm to see or hear !
- “ ‘ Then, fear no further !’ This is what he wrote.
- “ I know you cannot read,—therefore, let me !
- “ ‘ *My idol !*’ ” . . . . 1125

But I took it from her hand  
 And tore it into shreds. “ Why, join the rest  
 “ Who harm me ? Have I ever done you wrong ?

“ People have told me ’t is you wrong myself :

“ Let it suffice I either feel no wrong 1130

“ Or else forgive it,—yet you turn my foe !

“ The others hunt me and you throw a noose !”

She muttered, “ Have your wilful way !” I slept.

Whereupon . . . no, I leave my husband out !

It is not to do him more hurt, I speak. 1135

Let it suffice, when misery was most,

One day, I swooned and got a respite so.

She stooped as I was slowly coming to,

This Margherita, ever on my trace,

And whispered—“ Caponsacchi !” 1140

If I drowned,

But woke afloat i’ the wave with upturned eyes,

And found their first sight was a star ! I turned—

For the first time, I let her have her will,

Heard passively,—“ The imposthume at such head, 1145

“ One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve,—

“ And still no glance the good physician’s way

- " Who rids you of the torment in a trice !  
 " Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.  
 " He may prevent your husband, kill himself,           1150  
 " So desperate and all fordone is he !  
 " Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day !  
 " A sonnet from Mirtillo. ' *Peerless fair . . .*'  
 " All poetry is difficult to read,  
 " —The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks           1155  
 " Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,  
 " And for that purpose asks an interview.  
 " I can write, I can grant it in your name,  
 " Or, what is better, lead you to his house.  
 " Your husband dashes you against the stones ;       1160  
 " This man would place each fragment in a shrine :  
 " You hate him, love your husband !"

I returned,

- " It is not true I love my husband,—no,  
 " Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak,       1165  
 " —Assured that what you say is false, the same :  
 " Much as when once, to me a little child,  
 " A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,



“ A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,  
“ Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head  
“ In his two hands, ‘ Here ’s she will let me speak ! 1171  
“ ‘ You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,  
“ ‘ I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth ;  
“ ‘ And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed to-day,  
“ ‘ Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh ! 1175  
“ ‘ The angels, met in conclave, crowned me ! ’—thus  
“ He gibbered and I listened ; but I knew  
“ All was delusion, ere folks interposed  
“ ‘ Unfasten him, the maniac ! ’ Thus I know  
“ All your report of Caponsacchi false, 1180  
“ Folly or dreaming ; I have seen so much  
“ By that adventure at the spectacle,  
“ The face I fronted that one first, last time :  
“ He would belie it by such words and thoughts.  
“ Therefore while you profess to show him me, 1185  
“ I ever see his own face. Get you gone ! ”  
“ —That will I, nor once open mouth again,—  
“ No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost !  
“ On your head be the damage, so adieu ! ”

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,                    1190  
Till . . . what a strange thing now is to declare !  
Since I say anything, say all if true !  
And how my life seems lengthened as to serve !  
It may be idle or inopportune,  
But, true?—why, what was all I said but truth,                    1195  
Even when I found that such as are untrue  
Could only take the truth in through a lie ?  
Now—I am speaking truth to the Truth's self :  
God will lend credit to my words this time.

It had got half through April. I arose                            1200  
One vivid daybreak,—who had gone to bed  
In the old way my wont those last three years,  
Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.  
The last sound in my ear, the over-night,  
Had been a something let drop on the sly                        1205  
In prattle by Margherita, “ Soon enough  
“ Gaieties end, now Easter's past : a week,  
“ And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome,—  
“ Everyone leaves the town for Rome, this Spring,—  
“ Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,                    1210

“ Resigns himself and follows with the flock.”

I heard this drop and drop like rain outside

Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke :

So had I heard with like indifference,

“ And Michael’s pair of wings will arrive first           1215

“ At Rome, to introduce the company, ’

“ And bear him from our picture where he fights

“ Satan,—expect to have that dragon loose

“ And never a defender ! ”—my sole thought

Being still, as night came, “ Done, another day !       1220

“ How good to sleep and so get nearer death ! ”—

When, what, first thing at day-break, pierced the sleep

With a summons to me ? Up I sprang alive,

Light in me, light without me, everywhere

Change ! A broad yellow sun-beam was let fall       1225

From heaven to earth,—a sudden drawbridge lay,

Along which marched a myriad merry notes,

Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed

In rival dance, companions new-born too.

On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed           1230

Shook diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,

As first one, then another bird leapt by,

And light was off, and lo was back again,  
Always with one voice,—where are two such joys?—  
The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth, 1235  
Stood on the terrace,—o'er the roofs, such sky!

My heart sang, “I too am to go away,

“I too have something I must care about,

“Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!

“The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool, 1240

“And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,

“Falls out of the procession that befits,

“From window here to window there, with all

“The world to choose,—so well he knows his course?

“I have my purpose and my motive too, 1245

“My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!

“Had I been dead! How right to be alive!

“Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,

“Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword

“Or the poison,—poison, sword, was but a trick, 1250

“Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!

“My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!

“Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, nameless be

“The deed I could have dared against myself!

“ Now—see if I will touch an unripe fruit, 1255

“ And risk the health I want to have and use !

“ Not to live, now, would be the wickedness,—

“ For life means to make haste and go to Rome

“ And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once !”

Now, understand here, by no means mistake ! 1260

Long ago had I tried to leave that house

When it seemed such procedure would stop sin ;

And still failed more the more I tried—at first

The Archbishop, as I told you,—next, our lord

The Governor,—indeed I found my way, 1265

I went to the great palace where he rules,

Though I knew well 't was he who,—when I gave

A jewel or two, themselves had given me,

Back to my parents,—since they wanted bread,

They who had never let me want a nosegay,—he 1270

Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept

What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly theirs,

Though all the while my husband's most of all !

I knew well who had spoke the word wrought this :

Yet, being in extremity, I fled 1275

To the Governor, as I say,—scarce opened lip  
 When—the cold cruel snicker close behind—  
 Guido was on my trace, already there,  
 Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and smile,  
 And I—pushed back to him and, for my pains, 1280  
 Paid with . . . but why remember what is past ?  
 I sought out a poor friar the people call  
 The Roman, and confessed my sin which came  
 Of their sin,—that fact could not be repressed,—  
 The frightfulness of my despair in God : 1285  
 And, feeling, through the grate, his horror shake,  
 Implored him, “ Write for me who cannot write,  
 “ Apprise my parents, make them rescue me !  
 “ You bid me be courageous and trust God :  
 “ Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and write 1290  
 “ ‘ Dear friends, who used to be my parents once,  
 “ ‘ And now declare you have no part in me,  
 “ ‘ This is some riddle I want wit to solve,  
 “ ‘ Since you must love me with no difference.  
 “ ‘ Even suppose you altered,—there ’s your hate, 1295  
 “ ‘ To ask for : hate of you two dearest ones  
 “ ‘ I shall find liker love than love found here,

“ ‘ If husbands love their wives. Take me away  
 “ ‘ And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,  
 “ ‘ Even the scorpions ! How I shall rejoice !’ 1300  
 “ Write that and save me !” And he promised—wrote  
 Or did not write ; things never changed at all :  
 He was not like the Augustinian here !  
 Last, in a desperation I appealed  
 To friends, whoever wished me better days, 1305  
 To Guillichini, that ’s of kin,—“ What, I—  
 “ Travel to Rome with you ? A flying gout  
 “ Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg !”  
 Then I tried Conti, used to brave—laugh back  
 The louring thunder when his cousin scowled 1310  
 At me protected by his presence : “ You—  
 “ Who well know what you cannot save me from,—  
 “ Carry me off ! What frightens you, a priest ?”  
 He shook his head, looked grave—“ Above my strength !  
 “ Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth ; 1315  
 “ A formidabler foe than I dare fret :  
 “ Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size !  
 “ Of course I am a priest and Canon too,  
 “ But . . by the bye . . though both, not quite so bold

" As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest, 1320  
 " The personage in such ill odour here  
 " Because of the reports--pure birth o' the brain !  
 " Our Caponsacchi, he 's your true Saint George  
 " To slay the monster, set the Princess free,  
 " And have the whole High-Altar to himself : 1325  
 " I always think so when I see that piece  
 " I' the Pieve, that 's his church and mine, you know :  
 " Though you drop eyes at mention of his name ! "

That name had got to take a half-grotesque  
 Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense, 1330  
 Like any bye-word, broken bit of song  
 Born with a meaning, changed by mouth and mouth  
 That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance  
 Bids, till it now means nought but ugliness  
 And perhaps shame. 1335

. —All this intends to say,  
 That, over-night, the notion of escape  
 Had seemed distemper, dreaming ; and the name,—  
 Not the man, but the name of him, thus made



Into a mockery and disgrace,—why, she 1340  
 Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,  
 “ I name his name, and there you start and wince  
 “ As criminal from the red tongs’ touch !”—yet now,  
 Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me bright,  
 Choosing which butterfly should bear my news,— 1345  
 The white, the brown one, or that tinier blue,—  
 The Margherita, I detested so,  
 In she came—“ The fine day, the good Spring time !  
 “ What, up and out at window ? That is best.  
 “ No thought of Caponsacchi ?—who stood there 1350  
 “ All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,  
 “ Under the pelting of your water-spout—  
 “ Looked last look at your lattice ere he leave  
 “ Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome.  
 “ Ay, go to looking-glass and make you fine, 1355  
 “ While he may die ere touch one least loose hair  
 “ You drag at with the comb in such a rage !”

I turned—“ Tell Caponsacchi he may come !”

“ Tell him to come ? Ah, but, for charity,

- “ A truce to fooling ! Come ? What,—come this eve ?  
“ Peter and Paul ! But I see through the trick ! 1361  
“ Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his head,  
“ Flung from your terrace ! No joke, sincere truth ? ”

How plainly I perceived hell flash and fade  
O' the face of her,—the doubt that first paled joy; 1365  
Then, final reassurance I indeed  
Was caught now, never to be free again !  
What did I care ?—who felt myself of force  
To play with silk, and spurn the horsehair-springe.

- “ But—do you know that I have bade him come, 1370  
“ And in your own name ? I presumed so much,  
“ Knowing the thing you needed in your heart.  
“ But somehow—what had I to show in proof ?  
“ He would not come : half-promised, that was all,  
“ And wrote the letters you refused to read. 1375  
“ What is the message that shall move him now ? ”

“ After the Ave Maria, at first dark,  
“ I will be standing on the terrace, say ! ”

“ I would I had a good long lock of hair  
 “ Should prove I was not lying ! Never mind ! ” 1380

Off she went—“ May he not refuse, that ’s all—  
 “ Fearing a trick ! ”

I answered, “ He will come.”

And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up  
 To God the strong, God the beneficent, 1385  
 God ever mindful in all strife and strait,  
 Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,  
 Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.  
 An old rhyme came into my head and rang  
 Of how a virgin, for the faith of God, 1390  
 Hid herself, from the Paynims that pursued,  
 In a cave’s heart ; until a thunderstone,  
 Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch and prey :  
 And they laughed—“ Thanks to lightning, ours at last ! ”  
 And she cried, “ Wrath of God, assert His love ! 1395  
 “ Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His child ! ”  
 And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its flash,  
 Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful sword

She brandished till pursuers strewed the ground,  
So did the souls within them die away, 1400  
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded, safe,  
She walked forth to the solitudes and Christ :  
So should I grasp the lightning and be saved !

And still, as the day wore, the trouble grew  
Whereby I guessed there would be born a star, 1405  
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,  
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,  
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at last  
Where the deliverer waited me : the same  
Silent and solemn face, I first descried 1410  
At the spectacle, confronted mine once more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so  
The manhood, wasted then, was still at watch  
To save me yet a second time : no change  
Here, though all else changed in the changing world !

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade, 1416  
In some such sense as this, whatever the phrase.

- “ Friend, foolish words were borne from you to me ;  
“ Your soul behind them is the pure strong wind,  
“ Not dust and feathers which its breath may bear : 1420  
“ These to the witless seem the wind itself,  
“ Since proving thus the first of it they feel.  
“ If by mischance you blew offence my way,  
“ The straws are dropt, the wind desists no whit,  
“ And how such strays were caught up in the street 1425  
“ And took a motion from you, why inquire ?  
“ I speak to the strong soul, no weak disguise.  
“ If it be truth,—why should I doubt it truth?—  
“ You serve God specially, as priests are bound,  
“ And care about me, stranger as I am, 1430  
“ So far as wish my good,—that miracle  
“ I take to intimate He wills you serve  
“ By saving me,—what else can He direct ?  
“ Here is the service. Since a long while now,  
“ I am in course of being put to death : 1435  
“ While death concerned nothing but me, I bowed  
“ The head and bade, in heart, my husband strike.  
“ Now I imperil something more, it seems,  
“ Something that ’s trulier me than this myself,

“ Something I trust in God and you to save. 1440

“ You go to Rome, they tell me : take me there,

“ Put me back with my people ! ”

He replied—

The first word I heard ever from his lips,

All himself in it,—an eternity 1445

Of speech, to match the immeasurable depth

O’ the soul that then broke silence—“ I am yours.”

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,

Lead on, nor pause before it should stand still

Above the House o’ the Babe,—my babe to be, 1450

That knew me first and thus made me know him,

That had his right of life and claim on mine,

And would not let me die till he was born,

But pricked me at the heart to save us both, 1454

Saying “ Have you the will? Leave God the way ! ”

And the way was Caponsacchi—“ mine,” thank God !

He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i’ the leading and the light ! I know,

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Next night there was a cloud came, and not he :  
But I prayed through the darkness till it broke 1460  
And let him shine. The second night, he came.

“ The plan is rash ; the project desperate :  
“ In such a flight needs must I risk your life,  
“ Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,  
“ Ground for your husband’s rancour and revenge ”—  
So he began again, with the same face. 1466  
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star  
Turning now red that was so white before—  
One service apprehended newly : just  
A word of mine and there the white was back ! 1470

“ No, friend, for you will take me ! ’T is yourself  
“ Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I trust  
“ In the compensating great God : enough !  
“ I know you : when is it that you will come ? ”  
“ To-morrow at the day’s dawn.” Then I heard 1475  
What I should do : how to prepare for flight  
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade  
 “—You, whom I loathe, beware you break my sleep  
 “ This whole night! Couch beside me like the corpse  
 “ I would you were!” The rest you know, I think—  
 How I found Caponsacchi and escaped. 1482

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus Christ!  
 Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,  
 “ He hath a devil”—say he was Thy saint, 1485  
 My Caponsacchi! Shield and show—unshroud  
 In Thine own time the glory of the soul  
 If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, from vile pens  
 Scribbling a charge against him—(I was glad  
 Then, for the first time, that I could not write)— 1490  
 Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,  
 'T is otherwise: let men take, sift my thoughts  
 —Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach!  
 I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die, 1495  
 “ Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!”  
 Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand



Holding my hand across the world,—a sense  
 That reads, as only such can read, the mark  
 God sets on woman, signifying so 1500  
 She should—shall peradventure—be divine ;  
 Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars the print  
 And makes confusion, leaves the thing men see,  
 —Not this man sees,—who from his soul, re-writes  
 The obliterated charter,—love and strength 1505  
 Mending what 's marred. “ So kneels a votarist,  
 “ Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot  
 “ Where shrine once was, where temple yet may be,  
 “ Purgng the place but worshipping the while,  
 “ By faith and not by sight, sight clearest so,— 1510  
 “ Such way the saints work,”—says Don Celestine.  
 But I, not privileged to see a saint  
 Of old when such walked earth with crown and palm,  
 If I call “ saint ” what saints call something else—  
 The saints must bear with me, impute the fault 1515  
 To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,  
 Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year  
 Nor recognize the orb which Spring-flowers know.  
 But if meanwhile some insect with a heart

Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift joy— 1520

Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my dwarfed cup,

Crept close to me, brought lustre for the dark,

Comfort against the cold,—what though excess

Of comfort should miscall the creature—sun?

What did the sun to hinder while harsh hands 1525

Petal by petal, crude and colourless,

Tore me? This one heart gave me all the Spring!

Is all told? There 's the journey: and where 's time

To tell you how that heart burst out in shine?

Yet certain points do press on me too hard. 1530

Each place must have a name, though I forget:

How strange it was—there where the plain begins

And the small river mitigates its flow—

When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank,

And he divined what surge of bitterness, 1535

In overtaking me, would float me back

Whence I was carried by the striding day—

So,—“ This grey place was famous oncè,” said he—

And he began that legend of the place

As if in answer to the unspoken fear, 1540

And told me all about a brave man dead,  
Which lifted me and let my soul go on !  
How did he know too,—at that town's approach  
By the rock-side,—that in coming near the signs  
Of life, the house-roofs and the church and tower, 1545  
I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world  
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,  
As if the broken circlet joined again,  
Tightened itself about me with no break,—  
As if the town would turn Arezzo's self,— 1550  
The husband there,—the friends my enemies,  
All ranged against me, not an avenue  
To try, but would be blocked and drive me back  
On him,—this other, . . oh the heart in that !  
Did not he find, bring, put into my arms 1555  
A new-born babe?—and I saw faces beam  
Of the young mother proud to teach me joy,  
And gossips round expecting my surprise  
At the sudden hole through earth that lets in heaven.  
I could believe himself by his strong will 1560  
Had woven around me what I thought the world  
We went along in, every circumstance,

Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped so well !  
 For, through the journey, was it natural  
 Such comfort should arise from first to last ?                    1565  
 As I look back, all is one milky way ;  
 Still bettered more, the more remembered, so  
 Do new stars bud while I but search for old,  
 And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him—  
 Him I now see make the shine everywhere.                    1570  
 Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,  
 The cloud of weariness about my soul  
 Clogging too heavily, sucked down all sense,—  
 Still its last voice was, “ He will watch and care ;  
 “ Let the strength go, I am content : he stays ! ”            1575  
 I doubt not he did stay and care for all—  
 From that sick minute when the head swam round,  
 And the eyes looked their last and died on him,  
 As in his arms he caught me, and, you say,  
 Carried me in, that tragical red eve,                            1580  
 And laid me where I next returned to life  
 In the other red of morning, two red plates  
 That crushed together, crushed the time between,  
 And are since then a solid fire to me,—

When in, my dreadful husband and the world      1585  
 Broke,—and I saw him, master, by hell's right,  
 And saw my angel helplessly held back  
 By guards that helped the malice—the lamb prone,  
 The serpent towering and triumphant—then  
 Came all the strength back in a sudden swell,      1590  
 I did for once see right, do right, give tongue  
 The adequate protest : for a worm must turn  
 If it would have its wrong observed by God.  
 I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside  
 That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me, lay low      1595  
 The neutralizer of all good and truth.  
 If I sinned so,—never obey voice more  
 O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us—“ Bear !”  
 Not—“ Stand by, bear to see my angels bear !”  
 I am clear it was on impulse to serve God      1600  
 Not save myself,—no—nor my child unborn !  
 Had I else waited patiently till now ?—  
 Who saw my old kind parents, silly-sooth  
 And too much trustful, for their worst of faults,      1604  
 Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and starved, cast out  
 Into the kennel : I remonstrated,

Then sank to silence, for,—their woes at end,  
 Themselves gone,—only I was left to plague.  
 If only I was threatened and belied,  
 What matter? I could bear it and did bear;      1610  
 It was a comfort, still one lot for all :  
 They were not persecuted for my sake  
 And I, estranged, the single happy one.  
 But when at last, all by myself I stood  
 Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise,      1615  
 Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,  
 And take the angel's hand was sent to help—  
 And found the old adversary athwart the path—  
 Not my hand simply struck from the angel's, but  
 The very angel's self made foul i' the face      1620  
 By the fiend who struck there,—that I would not bear,  
 That only I resisted! So, my first  
 And last resistance was invincible.  
 Prayers move God ; threats, and nothing else, move  
     men !  
 I must have prayed a man as he were God      1625  
 When I implored the Governor to right  
 My parents' wrongs : the answer was a smile.

The Archbishop,—did I clasp his feet enough,  
 Hide my face hotly on them, while I told  
 More than I dared make my own mother know? 1630  
 The profit was—compassion and a jest.  
 This time, the foolish prayers were done with, right  
 Used might, and solemnized the sport at once.  
 All was against the combat : vantage, mine ?  
 The runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife, 1635  
 In company with the plan-contriving priest ?  
 Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I struck, bare,  
 At foe from head to foot in magic mail,  
 And off it withered, cobweb-armoury  
 Against the lightning ! 'T was truth singed the lies 1640  
 And saved me, not the vain sword nor weak speech !

You see, I will not have the service fail !  
 I say, the angel saved me : I am safe !  
 Others may want and wish, I wish nor want  
 One point o' the circle plainer, where I stand 1645  
 Traced round about with white to front the world.  
 What of the calumny I came across,  
 What o' the way to the end ?—the end crowns all.

The judges judged aright i' the main, gave me  
The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce 1650  
From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt,  
With the quiet nuns,—God recompense the good !  
Who said and sang away the ugly past.  
And, when my final fortune was revealed,  
What safety while, amid my parents' arms, 1655  
My babe was given me ! Yes, he saved my babe :  
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-like thing,  
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble : back  
Had it returned nor ever let me see !  
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me live 1660  
And give my bird the life among the leaves  
God meant him ! Weeks and months of quietude,  
I could lie in such peace and learn so much—  
Begin the task, I see how needful now,  
Of understanding somewhat of my past,— 1665  
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.  
Therefore, because this man restored my soul,  
All has been right ; I have gained my gain, enjoyed  
As well as suffered,—nay, got foretaste too  
Of better life beginning where this ends— 1670



All through the breathing-while allowed me thus,  
 Which let good premonitions reach my soul  
 Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow  
 And interpenetrate and change my heart,  
 Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay, unkind. 1675  
 For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,  
 Nobody did me one disservice more,  
 Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love  
 I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,  
 Born all in love, with nought to spoil the bliss 1680  
 A whole long fortnight : in a life like mine  
 A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.  
 All women are not mothers of a boy,  
 Though they live twice the length of my whole life,  
 And, as they fancy, happily all the same. 1685  
 There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,  
 As if it would continue, broaden out  
 Happily more and more, and lead to heaven :  
 Christmas before me,—was not that a chance ?  
 I never realized God's birth before— 1690  
 How He grew likest God in being born.  
 This time I felt like Mary, had my babe

Lying a little on my breast like hers.

So all went on till, just four days ago—

The night and the tap.

1695

O it shall be success

To the whole of our poor family! My friends

. . . Nay, father and mother,—give me back my word!

They have been rudely stripped of life, disgraced

Like children who must needs go clothed too fine, 1700

Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent:

If they too much affected frippery,

They have been punished and submit themselves,

Say no word: all is over, they see God

Who will not be extreme to mark their fault

1705

Or He had granted respite: they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,

Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,

I—pardon him? So far as lies in me,

I give him for his good the life he takes,

1710

Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.

Let him make God amends,—none, none to me

Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate  
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,  
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce, 1715  
Blotted the marriage-bond : this blood of mine  
Flies forth exultingly at any door,  
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.  
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,  
But where will God be absent? In His face 1720  
Is light, but in His shadow healing too :  
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed !  
And as my presence was importunate,—  
My earthly good, temptation and a snare,—  
Nothing about me but drew somehow down 1725  
His hate upon me,—somewhat so excused  
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him,—  
May my evanishment for evermore  
Help further to relieve the heart that cast  
Such object of its natural loathing forth ! 1730  
So he was made ; he nowise made himself :  
I could not love him, but his mother did.  
His soul has never lain beside my soul ;  
But for the unresisting body,—thanks !

---

He burned that garment spotted by the flesh ! 1735  
 Whatever he touched is rightly ruined : plague  
 It caught, and disinfection it had craved  
 Still but for Guido ; I am saved through him  
 So as by fire ; to him—thanks and farewell !

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety thence— 1740  
 From the sudden death of me, I mean : we poor  
 Weak souls, how we endeavour to be strong !  
 I was already using up my life,—  
 This portion, now, should do him such a good,  
 This other go to keep off such an ill ! 1745  
 The great life ; see, a breath and it is gone !  
 So is detached, so left all by itself  
 The little life, the fact which means so much.  
 Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,  
 His marvel of creation, foot would crush, 1750  
 Now that the hand He trusted to receive  
 And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce ?  
 The better ; He shall have in orphanage  
 His own way all the clearer : if my babe  
 Outlived the hour—and he has lived two weeks— 1755

It is through God who knows I am not by.  
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,  
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,  
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!  
Why should I doubt He will explain in time 1760  
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?  
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be  
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all—  
Only his mother's, born of love not hate!  
So shall I have my rights in after-time. 1765  
It seems absurd, impossible to-day;  
So seems so much else, not explained but known!

Ah! Friends, I thank and bless you every one!  
No more now: I withdraw from earth and man  
To my own soul, compose myself for God. 1770

Well, and there is more! Yes, my end of breath  
Shall bear away my soul in being true!  
He is still here, not outside with the world,  
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place!  
'T is now, when I am most upon the move, 1775

I feel for what I verily find—again  
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,  
The heart and its immeasurable love  
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,  
Who put his breast between the spears and me. 1780  
Ever with Caponsacchi! Otherwise  
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—  
How much more loss to him, with life debarred  
From giving life, love locked from love's display, 1784  
The day-star stopped its task that makes night morn!  
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,  
No work begun shall ever pause for death!  
Love will be helpful to me more and more  
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,  
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that! 1790  
Tell him that if I seem without him now,  
That 's the world's insight! Oh, he understands!  
He is at Civita—do I once doubt  
The world again is holding us apart?  
He had been here, displayed in my behalf 1795  
The broad brow that reverberates the truth,  
And flashed the word God gave him, back to man!

I know where the free soul is flown ! My fate  
Will have been hard for even him to bear :  
Let it confirm him in the trust of God, 1800  
Showing how holily he dared the deed !  
And, for the rest,—say, from the deed, no touch  
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,  
Not one faint fleck of failure ! Why explain ?  
What I see, oh, he sees and how much more ! 1805  
Tell him,—I know not wherefore the true word  
Should fade and fall unuttered at the last—  
It was the name of him I sprang to meet  
When came the knock, the summons and the end. 1809  
“ My great heart, my strong hand are back again ! ”  
I would have sprung to these, beckoning across  
Murder and hell gigantic and distinct  
O’ the threshold, posted to exclude me heaven :  
He is ordained to call and I to come ! 1814  
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God ?  
Say,—I am all in flowers from head to foot !  
Say,—not one flower of all he said and did,  
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown,  
But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam-tree

Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place 1820  
 At this supreme of moments! He is a priest;  
 He cannot marry therefore, which is right:  
 I think he would not marry if he could.  
 Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,  
 Mere imitation of the inimitable: 1825  
 In heaven we have the real and true and sure.  
 'T is there they neither marry nor are given  
 In marriage but are as the angels: right,  
 Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ  
 To say that! Marriage-making for the earth, 1830  
 With gold so much,—birth, power, repute so much,  
 Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!  
 Be as the angels rather, who, apart,  
 Know themselves into one, are found at length  
 Married, but marry never, no, nor give 1835  
 In marriage; they are man and wife at once  
 When the true time is: here we have to wait  
 Not so long neither! Could we by a wish  
 Have what we will and get the future now,  
 Would we wish aught done undone in the past? 1840  
 So, let him wait God's instant men call years;



---

Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,  
Do out the duty ! Through such souls alone  
God stooping shows sufficient of His light  
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise. 1845

VIII.

DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE  
ARCHANGELIS,  
PAUPERUM PROCURATOR.

AH, my Giacinto, he 's no ruddy rogue,  
Is not Cinone? What, to-day we 're eight?  
Seven and one 's eight, I hope, old curly-pate!  
—Branches me out his verb-tree on the slate,  
*Amo -as -avi -atum -are -ans,* 5  
Up to *-aturus*, person, tense, and mood,  
*Quies me cum subjunctivo* (I could cry)  
And chews Corderius with his morning crust!  
Look eight years onward, and he 's perched, he 's perched  
Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair, 10

Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he ?

—Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty case

Like this, papa shall triturate full soon

To smooth Papinianian pulp !

It trots 15

Already through my head, though noon be now,

Does supper-time and what belongs to eve.

Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work then play !

—The proverb bids. And “then” means, won't we  
hold

Our little yearly lovesome frolic feast, 20

Cinuolo's birth-night, Cincello's own,

That makes gruff January grin perforce !

For too contagious grows the mirth, the warmth

Escaping from so many hearts at once—

When the good wife, buxom and bonny yet, 25

Jokes the hale grandsire,—such are just the sort

To go off suddenly,—he who hides the key

O' the box beneath his pillow every night,—

Which box may hold a parchment (some one thinks)

Will show a scribbled something like a name 30

“ Cinino, Ciniccino,” near the end,

“ To whom I give and I bequeath my lands,  
 “ Estates, tenements, hereditaments,  
 “ When I decease as honest grandsire ought.”  
 Wherefore—yet this one time again perhaps— 35  
 Sha’n’t my Orvieto fuddle his old nose !  
 Then, uncles, one or the other, well i’ the world,  
 May—drop in, merely?—trudge through rain and wind,  
 Rather ! The smell-feasts rouse them at the hint  
 There ’s cookery in a certain dwelling-place ! 40  
 Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his poke,  
 Will pick the way, thrid lane by lantern-light,  
 And so find door, put galligaskin off  
 At entry of a decent domicile  
 Cornered in snug Condotti,—all for love, 45  
 All to crush cup with Cinucciatolo !

Well,

Let others climb the heights o’ the court, the camp !  
 How vain are chambering and wantonness,  
 Revel and rout and pleasures that make mad ! 50  
 Commend me to home-joy, the family board,  
 Altar and hearth ! These, with a brisk career,  
 A source of honest profit and good fame,

Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust,  
Just so much play as lets the heart expand, 55  
Honouring God and serving man,—I say,  
These are reality, and all else,—fluff,  
Nutshell and naught,—thank Flaccus for the phrase !  
Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor !

Why, work with a will, then ! Wherefore lazy now ? 60  
Turn up the hour-glass, whence no sand-grain slips  
But should have done its duty to the saint  
O' the day, the son and heir that 's eight years old !  
Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,  
And Latin dumple Cinarello's chin, 65  
The while we spread him fine and toss him flat  
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim our mass  
Of matter into Argument the First,  
Prime Pleading in defence of our accused,  
Which, once a-waft on paper wing, shall soar, 70  
Shall signalise before applausive Rome  
What study, and mayhap some mother-wit,  
Can do toward making Master fop and Fisc  
Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.

Now, how good God is! How falls plumb to point 75  
 This murder, gives me Guido to defend  
 Now, of all days i' the year, just when the boy  
 Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age  
 For some such illustration from his sire,  
 Stimulus to himself! One might wait years 80  
 And never find the chance which now finds me!  
 The fact is, there 's a blessing on the hearth,  
 A special providence for fatherhood!  
 Here 's a man, and what 's more, a noble, kills  
 —Not sneakingly but almost with parade— 85  
 Wife's father and wife's mother and wife's self  
 That 's mother's self of son and heir (like mine!)  
 —And here stand I, the favoured advocate,  
 Who pluck this flower o' the field, no Solomon  
 Was ever clothed in glorious gold to match, 90  
 And set the same in Cinoncino's cap!  
 I defend Guido and his comrades—I!  
 Pray God, I keep me humble: not to me—  
*Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus!*  
 How the fop chuckled when they made him Fisc! 95  
 We 'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for love,

All for our tribute to Cinotto's day !  
 Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent himself  
 May rub his eyes at the bustle,—ask "What 's this  
 " Rolling from out the rostrum, as a gust 100  
 " O' the *Pro Milone* had been prisoned there,  
 " And rattled Rome awake?" Awaken Rome,  
 How can the Pope doze on in decency?  
 He needs must wake up also, speak his word,  
 Have his opinion like the rest of Rome, 105  
 About this huge, this hurly-burly case :  
 He wants who can excogitate the truth,  
 Give the result in speech, plain black and white,  
 To mumble in the mouth and make his own  
 —A little changed, good man, a little changed ! 110  
 No matter, so his gratitude be moved,  
 By when my Giacintino gets of age,  
 Mindful of who thus helped him at a pinch,  
 Archangelus *Procurator Pauperum*—  
 And proved Hortensius *Redivivus* ! 115

Whew !

To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced herb  
 That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,

With here a goose foot, there a cock's-comb stuck,  
 Cemented in an element of cheese ! 120  
 I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good :  
 Last June he had a sort of strangling . . . bah !  
 He 's his own master, and his will is made.  
 So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly  
 As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace ! 125  
 May I lose cause if I vent one word more  
 Except,—with fresh-cut quill we ink the white,—  
*P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis.* There !

Count Guido married—or, in Latin due,  
 What? *Duxit in uxorem?*—commonplace ! 130  
*Tædas jugales iniit, subiit,*—ha !  
 He underwent the matrimonial torch?  
*Connubio stabili sibi junxit,*—hum !  
 In stable bond of marriage bound his own?  
 That 's clear of any modern taint : and yet . . . 135

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.  
 He shall attack me Terence with the dawn,  
 Shall Cinuccino ! Mum, mind business, Sir !



Thus circumstantially evolve we facts,

*Ita se habet ideo series facti :*

140

He wedded,—ah, with owls for augury !

*Nupserat, heu sinistris avibus,*

One of the blood Arezzo boasts her best,

*Dominus Guido, nobili genere ortus,*

*Pompiliæ . . .*

But the version afterward !

145

Curb we this ardour ! Notes alone, to-day,

The speech to-morrow and the Latin last :

Such was the rule in Farinacci's time.

Indeed I hitched it into verse and good.

Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,

150

Or else I think I too had poetized.

“ Law is the pork substratum of the fry,

“ Goose-foot and cock's-comb are Latinity,”—

And in this case, if circumstance assist,

We'll garnish law with idiom, never fear !

155

Out-of-the-way events extend our scope :

For instance, when Bottini brings his charge,

“ That letter which you say Pompilia wrote,

- " To criminate her parents and herself  
 " And disengage her husband from the coil,— 160  
 " That, Guido Franceschini wrote, say we :  
 " Because Pompilia could nor read nor write,  
 " Therefore he pencilled her such letter first,  
 " Then made her trace in ink the same again."  
 —Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip ? 165  
 How will he turn this and break Tully's pate ?  
 " *Existimandum* " (do n't I hear the dog !)  
 " *Quod Guido designaverit elementa*  
 " *Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint*  
 " (*Superinducto ab ea calamo*) 170  
 " *Notata atramento* "—there 's a style !—  
 " *Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat.*" Boh !  
 Now, my turn ! Either, *Insulse* ! (I outburst)  
 Stupidly put ! Inane is the response,  
*Inanis est responsio*, or the like— 175  
 To-wit, that each of all those characters,  
*Quod singula elementa epistolæ,*  
 Had first of all been traced for her by him,  
*Fuerant per eum prius designata,*  
 And then, the ink applied a-top of that, 180

*Et deinde, superinducto calamo,*

The piece, she says, became her handiwork,

*Per eam, efformata, ut ipsa asserit.*

Inane were such response! (a second time :)

Her husband outlined her the whole, forsooth? 185

*Vir ejus lineabat epistolam?*

What, she confesses that she wrote the thing,

*Fatetur eam scripsisse,* (scorn that scathes !)

That she might pay obedience to her lord?

*Ut viro obtemperaret, apices* 190

(Here repeat charge with proper varied phrase)

*Eo designante, ipsaque calamum*

*Super inducente?* By such argument,

*Ita pariter,* she seeks to show the same,

(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what saints you please) 195

*Epistolam ostendit, medius fulius,*

No voluntary deed but fruit of force !

*Non voluntarie sed coacte scriptam !*

That 's the way to write Latin, friend my Fisc !

Bottini is a beast, one barbarous : 200

Look out for him when he attempts to say

“ Armed with a pistol, Guido followed her ! ”

Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,  
 Cut away phrase by phrase from underfoot !  
*Guido Pompilium*—Guido thus his wife 205  
 Following with igneous engine, shall I have ?  
*Armis munitus igneis persequens*—  
*Arma sulphurea gestans*, sulphury arms,  
 Or, might one style a pistol—popping-piece ?  
*Armatus breviori sclopulo ?* 210  
 We 'll let him have been armed so, though it make  
 Somewhat against us : I had thought to own—  
 Provided with a simple travelling-sword,  
*Ense solummodo viatorio*  
*Instructus* : but we 'll grant the pistol here : 215  
 Better we lost the cause than lacked the gird  
 At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh !  
 It 's Venturini that decides for style.  
 Tommati rather goes upon the law.  
 So, as to law,— 220

Ah, but with law ne'er hope  
 To level the fellow,—do 'nt I know his trick !  
 How he draws up, ducks under, twists aside !

He 's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine  
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends 225  
'T is ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.  
He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,  
Lets Latin glance off as he makes appeal  
To saint that 's somewhere in the ceiling-top,—  
Do you suppose I do n't conceive the beast? 230  
Plague of the ermine-vermin! For it takes,  
It takes, and here 's the fellow Fisc, you see,  
And Judge, you 'll not be long in seeing next!  
Confound the fop—he 's now at work like me:  
Enter his study, as I seem to do, 235  
Hear him read out his writing to himself!  
I know he writes as if he spoke: I hear  
The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes, neck shot-forth,  
—I see him strain on tiptoe, soar and pour  
Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at all— 240  
Perorate in the air, then quick to press  
With the product! What abuse of type and sheet!  
He 'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-throw,  
Let argument slide, and then deliver swift  
Some bowl from quite an unguessed point of stand—

Having the luck o' the last word, the reply ! 246

A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke :

You face a fellow—cries “ So, there you stand ?

“ But I discourteous jump clean o'er your head !

“ You take ship-carpentry for pilotage, 250

“ Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps through the breach,—

“ Hammer and fortify at puny points !

“ Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight and safe !

“ 'T is here and here and here you ship a sea,

“ No good of your stopped leaks and littleness !” 255

Yet what do I name “ little and a leak ?”

The main defence o' the murder 's used to death,

By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap we pick :

Safer I worked the new, the unforeseen,

The nice bye-stroke, the fine and improvised 260

Point that can titillate the brain o' the Bench

Torpid with over-teaching, long ago !

As if Tommati (that has heard, reheard

And heard again, first this side and then that—

Guido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido, din 265

And deafen, full three years, at each long ear)

Do n't want amusement for instruction now,  
Won't rather feel a flea run o'er his ribs,  
Than a daw settle heavily on his head !  
Oh, I was young and had the trick of fence, 270  
Knew subtle pass and push with careless right—  
My left arm ever quiet behind back,  
With dagger ready : not both hands to blade !  
Puff and blow, put the strength out, Blunderbore !  
There 's my subordinate, young Spreti, now, 275  
Pedant and prig,—he 'll pant away at proof,  
That 's his way !

Now for mine—to rub some life  
Into one's choppy fingers this cold day !  
I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards 280  
The precious throat on which so much depends !  
Guido must be all goose-flesh in his hole,  
Despite the prison-straw : bad Carnival  
For captives ! no sliced fry for him, poor Count !  
Carnival-time,—another providence ! 285  
The town a-swarm with strangers to amuse,

To edify, to give one's name and fame  
 In charge of, till they find, some future day,  
 Cintino come and claim it, his name too,  
 Pledge of the pleasantness they owe papa— 290  
 Who else was it cured Rome of her great qualms,  
 When she must needs have her own judgment?—ay,  
 When all her topping wits had set to work,  
 Pronounced already on the case: mere boys,  
 Twice Cineruggiolo's age with half his sense, 295  
 As good as tell me, when I cross the court,  
 "Master Arcangeli!" (plucking at my gown)  
 "We can predict, we comprehend your play,  
 "We'll help you save your client." Tra-la-la!  
 I've travelled ground, from childhood to this hour, 300  
 To have the town anticipate my track!  
 The old fox takes the plain and velvet path,  
 The young hound's predilection,—prints the dew,  
 Do n't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw?  
 No! Burying nose deep down i' the briery bush, 305  
 Thus I defend Count Guido.

Where are we weak?

First, which is foremost in advantage too,



Our murder, we call, killing,—is a fact  
 Confessed, defended, made a boast of: good! 310  
 To think the Fisc claimed use of torture here,  
 And got thereby avowal plump and plain  
 That gives me just the chance I wanted,—scope  
 Not for brute-force but ingenuity,  
 Explaining matters, not denying them! 315  
 One may dispute,—as I am bound to do,  
 And shall,—validity of process here:  
 Inasmuch as a noble is exempt  
 From torture which plebeians undergo  
 In such a case: for law is lenient, lax, 320  
 Remits the torture to a nobleman  
 Unless suspicion be of twice the strength  
 Attaches to a man born vulgarly:  
 We do n't card silk with comb that dresses wool.  
 Moreover, 't was severity undue 325  
 In this case, even had the lord been lout.  
 What utters, on this head, our oracle,  
 Our Farinacci, my Gamaliel erst,  
 In those immortal "Questions?" This I quote:  
 "Of all the tools at Law's disposal, sure 330

" That named *Vigiliarum* is the best—  
 " That is, the worst—to whoso needs must bear :  
 " Lasting, as it may do, from some seven hours  
 " 'To ten ; (beyond ten, we 've no precedent ;  
 " Certain have touched their ten but, bah, they died !)  
 " It does so efficaciously convince, 336  
 " That,—speaking by much observation here,—  
 " Out of each hundred cases, by my count,  
 " Never I knew of patients beyond four  
 " Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six 340  
 " End by succumbing : only martyrs four,  
 " Of obstinate silence, guilty or no,—against  
 " Ninety-six full confessors, innocent  
 " Or otherwise,—so shrewd a tool have we !"  
 No marvel either : in unwary hands, 345  
 Death on the spot is no rare consequence :  
 As indeed all but happened in this case  
 To one of ourselves, our young tough peasant-friend  
 The accomplice called Baldeschi : they were rough,  
 Dosed him with torture as you drench a horse, 350  
 Not modify your treatment to a man :  
 So, two successive days he fainted dead,

And only on the third essay, gave up,  
Confessed like flesh and blood. We could reclaim,—  
Blockhead Bottini giving cause enough ! 355  
But no,—we 'll take it as spontaneously  
Confessed : we 'll have the murder beyond doubt.  
Ah, fortunate (the poet's word reversed)  
Inasmuch as we know our happiness !  
Had the antagonist left dubiety, 360  
Here were we proving murder a mere myth,  
And Guido innocent, ignorant, absent,—ay,  
Absent ! He was—why, where should Christian be?—  
Engaged in visiting his proper church,  
The duty of us all at Christmas-time, 365  
When Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung  
To madness by his relegation, cast  
About him and contrived a remedy  
In murder : since opprobrium broke afresh,  
By birth o' the babe, on him the imputed sire, 370  
He it was quietly sought to smother up  
His shame and theirs together,—killed the three,  
And fled—(go seek him where you please to search)—  
Just at the time when Guido, touched by grace,

Devotions ended, hastened to the spot, 375  
Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,  
“ Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace ! ”—  
And thus arrived i' the nick of time to catch  
The charge o' the killing, though great-heartedly  
He came but to forgive and bring to life. 380  
Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the soul ?  
“ Is thine eye evil because mine is good ? ”

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here  
But for the full confession round and sound !  
Thus might you wrong some kingly alchemist,— 385  
Whose concern should not be with showing brass  
Transmuted into gold, but triumphing,  
Rather, about his gold changed out of brass,  
Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,  
But in the idea, the spiritual display, 390  
The apparition buoyed by winged words  
Hovering above its birth-place in the brain,—  
Thus would you wrong this excellent personage  
Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,  
Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows,—in a word, 395

Demonstrate : when a faulty pipkin's crack  
May disconcert you his presumptive truth !  
Here were I hanging to the testimony  
Of one of these poor rustics—four, ye gods !  
Whom the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord 400  
May drive into undoing my whole speech,  
Undoing, on his birthday,—what is worse,—  
My son and heir !

I wonder, all the same,  
Not so much at those peasants' lack of heart ; 405  
But—Guido Franceschini, nobleman,  
Bear pain no better ! Everybody knows  
It used once, when my father was a boy,  
To form a proper, nay, important point  
I' the education of our well-born youth, 410  
That they took torture handsomely at need,  
Without confessing in this clownish guise.  
Each noble had his rack for private use,  
And would, for the diversion of a guest,  
Bid it be set up in the yard of arms, 415  
And take thereon his hour of exercise,—  
Command the varletry stretch, strain their best,

While friends looked on, admired my lord could smile  
 'Mid tugging which had caused an ox to roar.

Men are no longer men ! 420

—And advocates

No longer Farinacci, let us add,

If I one more time fly from point proposed !

So, *Vindicatio*,—here begins the speech !—

*Honoris causa*; thus we make our stand : 425

Honour in us had injury, we prove.

Or if we fail to prove such injury

More than misprision of the fact,—what then ?

It is enough, authorities declare,

If the result, the deed in question now, 430

Be caused by confidence that injury

Is veritable and no figment : since,

What, though proved fancy afterward, seemed fact

At the time, they argue shall excuse result.

That which we do, persuaded of good cause 435

For what we do, hold justifiable !—

The casuists bid : man, bound to do his best,

They would not have him leave that best undone

And mean to do his worst,—though fuller light  
 Show best was worst and worst would have been best.  
 Act by the present light!—they ask of man. 441  
*Ultra quod hic non agitur*, besides  
 It is not anyway our business here,  
*De probatione adulterii*,  
 To prove what we thought crime was crime indeed, 445  
*Ad irrogandam pœnam*, and require  
 Its punishment: such nowise do we seek:  
*Sed ad effectum*, but 't is our concern,  
*Excusandi*, here to simply find excuse,  
*Occisorem*, for who did the killing-work, 450  
*Et ad illius defensionem*, (mark  
 The difference) and defend the man, just that!  
*Quo casu levior probatio*  
*Exuberaret*, to which end far lighter proof  
 Suffices than the prior case would claim: 455  
 It should be always harder to convict,  
 In short, than to establish innocence.  
 Therefore we shall demonstrate first of all  
 That Honour is a gift of God to man  
 Precious beyond compare: which natural sense 460

Of human rectitude and purity,—  
 Which white, man's soul is born with,—brooks no touch :  
 Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,  
 Wounded by any wafture breathed from black,  
 Is,—honour within honour, like the eye 465  
 Centred i' the ball,—the honour of our wife.  
 Touch us o' the pupil of our honour, then,  
 Not actually,—since so you slay outright,—  
 But by a gesture simulating touch,  
 Presumable mere menace of such taint,— 470  
 This were our warrant for eruptive ire  
 “ To whose dominion I impose no end.”

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult  
 To Cinoncino,—say, the early books.  
 Pen, truce to further gambols! *Poscimus!*) 475

Nor can revenge of injury done here  
 To the honour proved the life and soul of us,  
 Be too excessive, too extravagant :  
 Such wrong seeks and must have complete revenge.  
 Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground : 480



Begin at the beginning, and proceed  
 Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,  
 In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,  
 Propounds for basis of all household law—  
 I hardly recollect it, but it ends, 485  
 “ Bird mates with bird, beast genders with his like,  
 “ And brooks no interference.” Bird and beast ?  
 The very insects . . . if they wive or no,  
 How dare I say when Aristotle doubts ?  
 But the presumption is they likewise wive, 490  
 At least the nobler sorts ; for take the bee  
 As instance,—copying King Solomon,—  
 Why that displeasure of the bee to aught  
 Which savours of incontinency, makes  
 The unchaste a very horror to the hive ? 495  
 Whence comes it bees obtain their epithet  
 Of *castæ apes*, notably “ the chaste ? ”  
 Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,  
 (The young sage,—see his book of Table-talk)  
 “ Such is their hatred of immodest act, 500  
 “ They fall upon the offender, sting to death.”  
 I mind a passage much confirmative

I' the Idyllist (though I read him Latinized)  
 " Why " asks a shepherd, " is this bank unfit  
 " For celebration of our vernal loves ? " 505  
 " Oh swain," returns the instructed shepherdess,  
 " Bees swarm here, and would quick resent our warmth !"  
 Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,  
 Nor gain nor guard connubiality :  
 But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous, 510  
 Do credit to their beasthood : witness him  
 That Ælian cites, the noble elephant,  
 (Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)  
 Who seeing, much offence beneath his nose,  
 His master's friend exceed in courtesy 515  
 The due allowance to his master's wife,  
 Taught them good manners and killed both at once,  
 Making his master and the world admire.  
 Indubitably, then, that master's self,  
 Favoured by circumstance, had done the same 520  
 Or else stood clear rebuked by his own beast.  
*Adco, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,*  
 Who values his own honour not a straw,—  
*Et non recuperare curat, nor*

Labours by might and main to salve its wound, . 525  
*Se ulciscendo*, by revenging him,  
*Nil differat a belluis*, is a brute,  
*Quinimo irrationabilior*  
*Ipsismet belluis*, nay, contrariwise,  
 Much more irrational than brutes themselves, 530  
 Should be considered, *reputetur!* How?  
 If a poor animal feel honour smart,  
 Taught by blind instinct nature plants in him,  
 Shall man,—confessed creation's master-stroke,  
 Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god, 535  
 Nay, of the nature of my Judges here,—  
 Shall man prove the insensible, the block,  
 The blot o' the earth he crawls on to disgrace?  
 (Come, that 's both solid and poetic!) Man  
 Derogate, live for the low tastes alone, 540  
 Mean creeping cares about the animal life?  
*Absit*, such homage to vile flesh and blood!

(May Gigia have remembered, nothing stings  
 Fried liver out of its monotony  
 Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped 545

Fine with the parsley : parsley-sprigs, I said—  
 Was there need I should say “and fennel too?”  
 But no, she cannot have been so obtuse !  
 To our argument ! The fennel will be chopped.)

From beast to man next mount we—ay, but, mind, 550  
 Still mere man, not yet Christian,—that, in time !  
 Not too fast, mark you ! 'T is on Heathen grounds  
 We next defend our act : then, fairly urge—  
 If this were done of old, in a green tree,  
 Allowed in the Spring rawness of our kind, 555  
 What may be licenced in the Autumn dry  
 And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of man ?  
 If, with his poor and primitive half-lights,  
 The Pagan, whom our devils served for gods,  
 Could stigmatise the breach of marriage-vow 560  
 As that which blood, blood only might efface,—  
 Absolve the husband, outraged, whose revenge  
 Anticipated law, plied sword himself,—  
 How with the Christian in full blaze of noon ?  
 Shall not he rather double penalty, 565  
 Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,

Let privilege be minished, droop, decay?

Therefore set forth at large the ancient law !

Superabundant the examples be

To pick and choose from. The Athenian Code, 570

Solon's, the name is serviceable,—then,

The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that fifteenth,—

“Romulus” likewise rolls out round and large.

The Julian ; the Cornelian ; Gracchus' Law :

So old a chime, the bells ring of themselves ! 575

Spreti can set that going if he please,

I point you, for my part, the belfry plain,

Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,

Into the Christian day shall broaden next.

First, the fit compliment to His Holiness 580

Happily reigning : then sustain the point—

All that was long ago declared as law

By the natural revelation, stands confirmed

By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint,—

To-wit—that Honour is man's supreme good. 585

Why should I baulk Saint Jerome of his phrase ?

*Ubi honor non est*, where no honour is,

*Ibi contemptus est*; and where contempt,  
*Ibi injuria frequens*; and where that,  
 The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio*; 590  
 And where the indignation, *ibi quies*  
*Nulla*: and where there is no quietude,  
 Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast  
 Down from the heights where it proposed to dwell,  
*Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.* 595  
 And naturally the mind is so cast down,  
 Since harder 't is, *quum difficilius sit*,  
*Iram cohibere*, to coerce one's wrath,  
*Quam miracula facere*, than work miracles,—  
 Saint Gregory smiles in his First Dialogue. 600  
 Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul, the man  
 Who makes esteem of honour and repute,  
 Whenever honour and repute are touched,  
 Arrives at term of fury and despair,  
 Loses all guidance from the reason-check: 605  
 As in delirium or a frenzy-fit,  
 Nor fury nor despair he satiates,—no,  
 Not even if he attain the impossible,  
 O'erturn the hinges of the universe

- To annihilate—not whoso caused the smart 610  
 Solely, the author simply of his pain,  
 But the place, the memory, *vituperii*,  
 O' the shame and scorn : *quia*,—says Solomon,  
 (The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth  
 In Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the end) 615  
 —Because, the zeal and fury of a man,  
*Zelus et furor viri*, will not spare,  
*Non parcat*, in the day of his revenge,  
*In die vindictæ*, nor will acquiesce,  
*Nec acquiescet*, through a person's prayers, 620  
*Cujusdam precibus*,—*nec suscipiet*,  
 Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for  
 Redemption, *dona plurium*, gifts of friends,  
 Mere money-payment to compound for ache.  
 Who recognises not my client's case? 625  
 Whereto, as strangely consentaneous here,  
 Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle writ  
 To Robertulus, his nephew : “ Too much grief,  
 “ *Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat*,  
 “ Does not excogitate propriety, 630  
 “ *Non verecundatur*, nor knows shame at all,

" *Non consulit rationem*, nor consults  
 " Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*  
 " *Damnum*, nor dreads the loss of dignity ;  
 " *Modum et ordinem*, order and the mode, 635  
 " *Ignorat*, it ignores : " why, trait for trait,  
 Was ever portrait limned so like the life ?  
 (By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say ?  
 I hear he 's first in reputation now.)  
 Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred Text : 640  
 That 's not so much the portrait as the man !  
 Samson in Gaza was the antetype  
 Of Guido at Rome : observe the Nazarite !  
 Blinded he was,—an easy thing to bear :  
 Intrepidly he took imprisonment, 645  
 Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the mill :  
 But when he found himself, i' the public place,  
 Destined to make the common people sport,  
 Disdain burned up with such an impetus  
 I' the breast of him that, all the man one fire, 650  
*Moriatur*, roared he, let my soul's self die,  
*Anima mea*, with the Philistines !  
 So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death and all,



*Multosque plures interfecit, ay,*  
And many more he killed thus, *moriens,* 655  
Dying, *quam vivus,* than in his whole life,  
*Occiderat,* he ever killed before.  
Are these things writ for no example, Sirs?  
One instance more, and let me see who doubts!  
Our Lord Himself, made all of mansuetude, 660  
Sealing the sum of sufferance up, received  
Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting  
Without complaint: but when He found Himself  
Touched in His honour never so little for once,  
Then outbroke indignation pent before— 665  
“ *Honorem meum nemini dabo!* ” “ No,  
“ My honour I to nobody will give ! ”  
And certainly the example so hath wrought,  
That whosoever, at the proper worth,  
Apprises worldly honour and repute, 670  
Esteems it nobler to die honoured man  
Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries  
Disgraced in the eye o’ the world. We find Saint Paul  
No recreant to this faith delivered once :  
“ Far worthier were it that I died,” cries he, 675

*Expedit mihi magis mori*, “ than

“ That anyone should make my glory void,”

*Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet !*

See, *ad Corinthienses* : whereupon

Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit, 680

Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,

So I desist from bringing forward here.

(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved

*Satis superque*, both enough and to spare, 685

That Revelation old and new admits

The natural man may effervesce in ire,

O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with foamy rage,

At the first puncture to his self-respect ?

Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this law-bud 690

Full-blown now, soon to bask the absolute flower

Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day,—

Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-streak,

One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,

One dew-drop comfort to humanity, 695

Now that the chalice teems with noonday wine ?

Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge—  
Referring just to what makes out our case !  
Under old dispensation, argue they,  
The doom of the adulterous wife was death, 700  
Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,  
"Put her away!" next legislates our Lord ;  
And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a wife !"  
Ordains the Church, "she typifies ourself,  
The Bride no fault shall cause to fall from Christ." 705  
Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law  
Has passed away—which who presumes to doubt ?  
As not one word of Christ is rendered vain—  
Which, could it be though heaven and earth should pass ?  
—Where do I find my proper punishment 710  
For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask  
Of my infallible Pope,—who now remits  
Even the divorce allowed by Christ in lieu  
Of lapidation Moses licensed me ?  
The Gospel checks the Law which throws the stone, 715  
The Church tears the divorce-bill Gospel grants :  
Shall wives sin and enjoy impunity ?  
What profits me the fulness of the days,

The final dispensation, I demand,  
 Unless Law, Gospel and the Church subjoin 720  
 " But who hath barred thee primitive revenge,  
 " Which, like fire damped and dammed up, burns more  
     fierce?  
 " Use thou thy natural privilege of man,  
 " Else wert thou found like those old ingrate Jews,  
 " Despite the manna-banquet on the board, 725  
 " A-longing after melons, cucumbers,  
 " And such like trash of Egypt left behind !"

(There was one melon had improved our soup:  
 But did not Cinoncino need the rind  
 To make a boat with? So I seem to think.) 730

Law, Gospel and the Church—from these we leap  
 To the very last revelation, easy rule  
 Befitting the well-born and thorough-bred  
 O' the happy day we live in, not the dark  
 O' the early rude and acorn-eating race. 735  
 " Behold," quoth James, " we bridle in a horse  
 " And turn his body as we would thereby !"

Yea, but we change the bit to suit the growth,  
And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged spike  
We hasten to remit our managed steed 740  
Who wheels round at persuasion of a touch.  
Civilization bows to decency,  
The acknowledged use and wont: 't is manners,—mild  
But yet imperative law,—which make the man.  
Thus do we pay the proper compliment 745  
To rank, and that society of Rome,  
Hath so obliged us by its interest,  
Taken our client's part instinctively,  
As unaware defending its own cause.  
What *dictum* doth Society lay down 750  
I' the case of one who hath a faithless wife?  
Wherewithal should the husband cleanse his way?  
Be patient and forgive? Oh, language fails,—  
Shrinks from depicting his turpitude!  
For if wronged husband raise not hue and cry, 755  
*Quod si maritus de adulterio non*  
*Conquereretur*, he 's presumed a—foh!  
*Presumitur leno*: so, complain he must.  
But how complain? At your tribunal, lords?

Far weightier challenge suits your sense, I wot ! 760  
 You sit not to have gentlemen propose  
 Questions gentility can itself discuss.  
 Did not you prove that to our brother Paul?  
 The Abate, *quum judicialiter*  
*Prosequeretur*, when he tried the law, 765  
*Guidonis causam*, in Count Guido's case,  
*Accidit ipsi*, this befell himself,  
*Quod risum moverit et cachinnos*, that  
 He moved to mirth and cachinnation, all  
 Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus* 770  
*Etiam sensatis et cordatis*, men  
 Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the very Court,  
*Ipsismet in iudicibus*, I might add,  
*Non tamen dicam.* In a cause like this,  
 So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*, 775  
 Delicate, intertwined and obscure,  
 That Law refused loan of a finger-tip  
 To unravel, re-adjust the hopeless twine,  
 While, half-a-dozen steps outside Law's seat,  
 There stood a foolish trifler with a tool 780  
 A-dangle to no purpose by his side,

Had clearly cut the embroilment in a trice.

*Asserunt enim unanimiter*

*Doctores*, for the Doctors all assert,

That husbands, *quod mariti*, must be held 785

*Viles, cornuti reputantur*, vile,

Fronts branching forth a florid infamy,

*Si propriis manibus*, if with their own hands,

*Non sumunt*, they fail straightway take revenge,

*Vindictam*, but expect the deed be done 790

By the Court—*expectant illam fieri*

*Per iudices, qui summopere rident*, which

Gives an enormous guffaw for reply,

*Et cachinnantur*. For he ran away,

*Deliquit enim*, just that he might 'scape 795

The censure of both counsellors and crowd,

*Ut vulgi et Doctorum evitaret*

*Censuram*, and lest so he superadd

To loss of honour ignominy too,

*Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam* 800

*Amisso honori superadderet*.

My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate step

Was—we referred ourselves to law at all !

'Twit me not with, " Law else had punished you ! "

Each punishment of the extra-legal step, 805  
 To which the high-born preferably revert,  
 Is ever for some oversight, some slip  
 I' the taking vengeance, not for vengeance' self.  
 A good thing, done unhandsomely, turns ill ;  
 And never yet lacked ill the law's rebuke. 810  
 For pregnant instance, let us contemplate  
 The luck of Leonardus,—see at large  
 Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.

This Leonard finds his wife is false : what then ?  
 He makes her own son snare her, and entice 815  
 Out of the town walls to a private walk,  
 Wherein he slays her with commodity.  
 They find her body half-devoured by dogs :  
 Leonard is tried, convicted, punished, sent  
 To labour in the galleys seven years long : 820  
 Why? For the murder? Nay, but for the mode !  
*Malus modus occidendi*, ruled the Court,  
 An ugly mode of killing, nothing more !  
 Another fructuous sample,—see " *De Re*  
 " *Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine piece. 825



Another husband, in no better plight,  
Simulates absence, thereby tempts his wife ;  
On whom he falls, out of sly ambushade,  
Backed by a brother of his, and both of them  
Armed to the teeth with arms that law had blamed. 830  
*Nimis dolose*, overwilyly,  
*Fuisse operatum*, did they work,  
Pronounced the law : had all been fairly done  
Law had not found him worthy, as she did,  
Of four years' exile. Why cite more? Enough 835  
Is good as a feast—(unless a birthday-feast  
For one's Cinuccio) so, we finish here.  
My lords, we rather need defend ourselves  
Inasmuch as, for a twinkling of an eye,  
We hesitatingly appealed to law,— 840  
Than need deny that, on mature advice,  
We blushingly bethought us, bade revenge  
Back to its simple proper private way  
Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.  
Judges, here is the law, and here beside, 845  
The testimony ! Look to it !

Pause and breathe !

So far is only too plain ; we must watch :  
 Bottini will scarce hazard an attack  
 Here: let 's anticipate the fellow's play, 850  
 And guard the weaker places—warily ask,  
 What if considerations of a sort,  
 Reasons of a kind, arise from out the strange  
 Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance  
 Of this our (candour owns) abnormal act, 855  
 To bar the right of us revenging so ?  
 " Impunity were otherwise your meed :  
 " Go slay your wife and welcome,"—may be urged,—  
 " But why the innocent old couple slay,  
 " Pietro, Violante ? You may do enough, 860  
 " Not too much, not exceed the golden mean :  
 " Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gentile, Jew,  
 " Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the mode,  
 " Was justified to push revenge so far ! "

No, indeed ? Why, thou very sciolist ! 865  
 The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to do,  
 Was virtual wrong done by the parents here—  
 Imposing her upon us as their child—

Themselves allow: then, her fault was their fault,  
Her punishment be theirs accordingly! 870  
But wait a little, sneak not off so soon!  
Was this cheat solely harm to Guido, pray?  
The precious couple you call innocent,—  
Why, they were felons that law failed to clutch,  
*Qui ut fraudarent*, who that they might rob, 875  
*Legitime vocatos*, folks law called,  
*Ad fidei commissum*, true heirs to the Trust,  
*Partum supposuerunt*, feigned this birth,  
*Immemores reos factos esse*, blind  
To the fact that, guilty, they incurred thereby, 880  
*Ultimi supplicii*, hanging or what's worse.  
Do you blame us that we turn law's instruments.  
Not mere self-seekers,—mind the public weal,  
Nor make the private good our sole concern?  
That having—shall I say—secured a thief, 885  
Not simply we recover from his pouch  
The stolen article our property,  
But also pounce upon our neighbour's purse  
We opportunely find reposing there,  
And do him justice while we right ourselves? 890

He owes us, for our part, a drubbing say,  
 But owes our neighbour just a dance i' the air  
 Under the gallows: so, we throttle him.  
 That neighbour's Law, that couple are the Thief,  
 We are the over ready to help Law— 895  
 Zeal of her house hath eaten us up: for which,  
 Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,  
*Crudum Priamum*, devour poor Priam raw,  
 ('T was Jupiter's own joke) with babes to boot,  
*Priamique pisinnos*, in Homeric phrase? 900  
 Shame!—and so ends the period prettily.

But even,—prove the pair not culpable,  
 Free as unborn babe from connivance at,  
 Participation in, their daughter's fault:  
 Ours the mistake. Is that a rare event? 905  
*Non semel*, it is anything but rare,  
*In contingentia facti*, that by chance,  
*Impunes evaserunt*, go scot-free,  
*Qui*, such well-meaning people as ourselves,  
*Iusto dolore moti*, who aggrieved 910  
 With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay

Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong heads.

Cite we an illustrative case in point :

*Mulier Smirnea quædam*, good my lords,

A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once, 915

*Virum et filium ex eo conceptum*, who

Both husband and her son begot by him,

Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,

*Vir filium suum perdidcrat*, her spouse

Had been beforehand with her, killed her son, 920

*Matrimonii primi*, of a previous bed.

*Deinde accusata*, then accused,

*Apud Dolabellam*, before him that sat

Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*

*Contaminatam liberare*, nor 925

To liberate a woman doubly-dyed

With murder, *voluit*, made he up his mind,

*Nec condemnare*, nor to doom to death,

*Iusto dolore impulsam*, one impelled

By just grief, *sed remisit*, but sent her up 930

*Ad Arcopagum*, to the Hill of Mars,

*Sapientissimorum judicium*

*Cætum*, to that assembly of the sage

- Paralleled only by my judges here ;  
*Ubi, cognito de causa*, where, the cause 935  
 Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave reply,  
*Ut ipsa et accusator*, that both sides  
 O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back again,  
*Post centum annos*, after a hundred years,  
 For judgment ; *et sic*, by which sage decree. 940  
*Duplici parricidio rea*, one  
 Convicted of a double parricide,  
*Quamvis etiam innocentem*, though in truth  
 Out of the pair, one innocent at least  
 She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death, 945  
*Undequaque*, yet she altogether 'scaped,  
*Evasit impunis*. See the case at length  
 In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,  
 That eighth book of his Memorable Facts.  
 Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark : 950  
*Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat*,  
 Just so, a lady who had taken care,  
*Homicidium viri*, that her lord be killed,  
*Ex denegatione debiti*,  
 For denegation of a certain debt, 955

*Matrimonialis*, he was loth to pay,  
*Fuit pecuniaria mulcta*, was  
 Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,  
*Punita, et ad pœnam*, and to pains,  
*Temporalem*, for a certain space of time, 960  
*In monasterio*, in a convent.

(Ay,

*In monasterio!* How he manages,  
*In* with the ablative, the accusative!  
 I had hoped to have hitched the villain into verse 965  
 For a gift, this very day, a complete list  
 O' the prepositions each with proper case,  
 Telling a story, long was in my head.  
 What prepositions take the accusative?  
*Ad* to or at—*who saw the cat?*—down to 970  
*Ob*, for, because of, *keep her claws off!* Ah,  
 Law in a man takes the whole liberty!  
 The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found!)

And now, sea widens and the coast is clear.  
 What of the dubious act you bade excuse? 975

Surely things brighten, brighten, till at length  
 Remains—so far from act that needs defence--  
 Apology to make for act delayed  
 One minute, let alone eight mortal months  
 Of hesitation ! “ Why procrastinate ? ” 980  
 (Out with it my Bottinius, ease thyself !)  
 “ Right, promptly done, is twice right : right delayed  
 “ Turns wrong. We grant you should have killed your  
     wife,  
 “ But killed o’ the moment, at the meeting her  
 “ In company with the priest : then did the tongue 985  
 “ O’ the Brazen Head give licence, ‘ Time is now ! ’  
 “ Wait to make mind up ? ‘ Time is past ’ it peals.  
 “ Friend, you are competent to mastery  
 “ O’ the passions that confessedly explain  
 “ An outbreak : you allow an interval, 990  
 “ And then break out as if time’s clock still chanced.  
 “ You have forfeited your chance, and flat you fall  
 “ Into the commonplace category  
 “ Of men bound to go softly all their days,  
 “ Obeying law.” 995



Now, which way make response?

What was the answer Guido gave, himself?

—That so to argue came of ignorance

How honour bears a wound : “ For, wound,” said he,

“ My body, and the smart soon mends and ends : 1000

“ While, wound my soul where honour sits and rules,

“ Longer the sufferance, stronger grows the pain,

“ Being *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first.”

But try another tack, urge common sense

By way of contrast : say—Too true, my lords ! 1005

We did demur, awhile did hesitate :

Since husband sure should let a scruple speak

Ere he slay wife,—for his own safety, lords !

Carpers abound in this misjudging world :

Moreover, there 's a nicety in law 1010

That seems to justify them should they carp.

Suppose the source of injury a son,—

Father may slay such son yet run no risk :

Why graced with such a privilege ? Because

A father so incensed with his own child, 1015

Or must have reason, or believe he has :

*Quia semper*, seeing that in such event,

*Presumitur*, the law is bound suppose,  
*Quod capiat pater*, that the sire must take,  
*Bonum consilium pro filio*, 1020  
 The best course as to what befits his boy,  
 Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love,  
*Amoris*, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;  
*Quam confidentiam*, which confidence,  
*Non habet*, law declines to entertain, 1025  
*De viro*, of the husband : where finds he  
 An instinct that compels him love his wife ?  
 Rather is he presumably her foe.  
 So, let him ponder long in this bad world  
 Ere do the simplest act of justice. 1030

But

Again—and here we brush Bottini's breast—  
 Object you, "See the danger of delay !  
 " Suppose a man murdered my friend last month :  
 " Had I come up and killed him for his pains 1035  
 " In rage, I had done right, allows the law :  
 " I meet him now and kill him in cold blood,  
 " I do wrong, equally allows the law :

“ Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine ? ”

*In plenitudine intellectus es ?* 1040

Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such slayer’s life,  
Returns it life to thy slain friend at all ?

Had he stolen ring instead of stabbing friend,—  
To-day, to-morrow or next century,

Meeting the thief, thy ring upon his thumb, 1045

Thou justifiably hadst wrung it thence :

So, couldst thou wrench thy friend’s life back again,

Though prisoned in the bosom of his foe,

Why, law would look complacent on thy wrath.

Our case is, that the thing we lost, we found : 1050

The honour, we were robbed of eight months since,

Being recoverable at any day

By death of the delinquent. Go thy ways !

Ere thou hast learned law, will be much to do,

As said the gaby while he shod the goose. 1055

Nay, if you urge me, interval was none !

From the inn to the villa—blank or else a bar

Of adverse and contrarious incident

Solid between us and our just revenge !

What with the priest who flourishes his blade, 1060  
The wife who like a fury flings at us,  
The crowd—and then the capture, the appeal  
To Rome, the journey there, the journey thence,  
The shelter at the House of Convertites,  
The visits to the Villa, and so forth, 1065  
Where was one minute left us all this while  
To put in execution that revenge  
We planned o' the instant?—as it were, plumped down  
O' the spot, some eight months since, which round sound egg,  
Rome, more propitious than our nest, should hatch ! 1070  
Object not, “ You reached Rome on Christmas-eve,  
“ And, despite liberty to act at once,  
“ Waited a whole and indecorous week ! ”  
Hath so the Molinism, the canker, lords,  
Eaten to the bone ? Is no religion left ? 1075  
No care for aught held holy by the Church ?  
What, would you have us skip and miss those Feasts  
O' the Natal Time, must we go prosecute  
Secular business on a sacred day ?  
Should not the merest charity expect, 1080  
Setting our poor concerns aside for once,

We hurried to the song matutinal  
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for the Mass  
The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo chaunts,  
Then rushed on to the blessing of the Hat 1085  
And Rapier, which the Pope sends to what prince  
Has done most detriment to the Infidel—  
And thereby whetted courage if 't were blunt?  
Meantime, allow we kept the house a week,  
Suppose not we were idle in our mew! 1090  
Picture us raging here and raving there—  
“ ‘ Money?’ I need none. ‘ Friends?’ The word is null.  
“ Restore the white was on that shield of mine  
“ Borne at ” . . . wherever might be shield to bear.  
“ I see my grandsire, he who fought so well 1095  
“ At ” . . . here find out and put in time and place,  
Or else invent the fight his grandsire fought :  
“ I see this! I see that ! ”

(See nothing else,

Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an hour! 1100  
What to the uncle, as I bid advance  
The smoking dish? “ Fry suits a tender tooth !

“ Behoves we care a little for our kin—

“ You, Sir,—who care so much for cousinship

“ As come to your poor loving nephew’s feast !” 1105

He has the reversion of a long lease yet—

Land to bequeath ! He loves lamb’s fry, I know !)

Here fall to be considered those same six

Qualities ; what Bottini needs must call

So many aggravations of our crime, 1110

Parasite-growth upon mere murder’s back.

We summarily might dispose of such

By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some skit—

“ So, since there ’s proved no crime to aggravate,

“ A fico for your aggravations, Fisc !” 1115

No,—handle mischief rather,—play with spells

Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh the while

We show that did he rise we are his match !

Therefore, first aggravation : we made up—

Over and above our simple murderous selves— 1120

A regular assemblage of armed men,

*Coadunatio armatorum*,—ay,

Unluckily it was the very judge

Who sits in judgment on our cause to-day  
 That passed the law as Governor of Rome : 1125  
 “ Four men armed,”—though for lawful purpose, mark !  
 Much more for an acknowledged crime,—“ shall die.”  
 We five were armed to the teeth, meant murder too ?  
 Why, that ’s the very point that saves us, Fisc !  
 Let me instruct you. Crime nor done nor meant,—  
 You punish still who arm and congregate : 1131  
 For why have used bad means to a good end ?  
 Crime being meant not done,—you punish still  
 The means to crime, whereon you haply pounce,  
 Though accident have baulked you of their end. 1135  
 But crime not only compassed but complete,  
 Meant and done too ? Why, since you have the end,  
 Be that your sole concern, nor mind those means  
 No longer to the purpose ! Murdered we ?  
 (—Which, that our luck was in the present case, 1140  
*Quod contigisse in præsentî casu,*  
 Is palpable, *manibus palpatum est*—)  
 Make murder out against us, nothing less !  
 Of many crimes committed with a view  
 To one main crime, Law overlooks the less, 1145

Intent upon the large. Suppose a man  
 Having in view commission of a theft,  
 Climbs the town-wall: 't is for the theft he hangs,  
 In case he stands convicted of such theft :  
 Law remits whipping, due to who clomb wall 1150  
 Through bravery or wantonness alone,  
 Just to dislodge a daw's nest or plant flag.  
 So I interpret you the manly mind  
 Of him the Judge shall judge both you and me,—  
 Our Governor, who, being no Fisc, my Fisc, 1155  
 Cannot have blundered on ineptitude !

Next aggravation,—that the arms themselves  
 Were specially of such forbidden sort  
 Through shape or length or breadth, as, prompt, Law  
 plucks  
 From single hand of solitary man, 1160  
 Making him pay the carriage with his life :  
*Delatio armorum*, arms against the rule,  
*Contra formam constitutionis*, of  
 Pope Alexander's blessed memory.  
 Such is the poignard with the double prong, 1165



Horn-like, when tines make bold the antlered buck,  
 And made of brittle glass—wherewith to stab  
 And break off short and so let fragment stick  
 Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery :

Such being the Genoese blade with hooked edge 1170  
 That did us service at the villa here.

*Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,*

But,—let so rare a personage forgive,—  
 Fisc, thy objection is a foppery !

Thy charge runs that we killed three innocents : 1175  
 Killed, dost see ? Then, if killed, what matter how ? —  
 By stick or stone, by sword or dagger, tool

Long or tool short, round or triangular—  
 Poor slain folks find small comfort in the choice !

Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc ! 1180

Nature cries out “ Take the first arms you find ! ”

*Furor ministrat arma :* where ’s a stone ?

*Unde mi lapidem,* where darts for me ?

*Unde sagittas ?* But subdue the bard

And rationalize a little. Eight months since, 1185  
 Had we, or had we not, incurred your blame  
 For letting ’scape unpunished this bad pair ?

I think I proved that in last paragraph !

Why did we so ? Because our courage failed.

Wherefore ? Through lack of arms to fight the foe :

We had no arms or merely lawful ones, 1191

An unimportant sword and blunderbuss,

Against a foe, pollent in potency,

The *amasius*, and our vixen of a wife.

Well then, how culpably do we gird loin 1195

And once more undertake the high emprise,

Unless we load ourselves this second time

With handsome superfluity of arms,

Since better is "too much" than "not enough,"

And "*plus non vitiat*," too much does no harm, 1200

Except in mathematics, sages say.

Gather instruction from the parable !

At first we are advised—"A lad hath here

"Seven barley loaves and two small fishes : what

"Is that among so many ?" Aptly asked : 1205

But put that question twice and, quite as apt

The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full !"

And, while we speak of superabundance, fling

We word by the way to fools who cast their flout  
On Guido—" Punishment were pardoned him, 1210  
" But here the punishment exceeds offence :  
" He might be just, but he was cruel too ! "  
Why, grant there seems a kind of cruelty  
In downright stabbing people he could maim,  
(If so you stigmatise the stern and strict) 1215  
Still, Guido meant no cruelty—may plead  
Transgression of his mandate, over-zeal  
O' the part of his companions : all he craved  
Was, they should fray the faces of the folk,  
Merely disfigure, nowise make them die. 1220  
*Solummodo fassus est*, he owns no more,  
*Dedissee mandatum*, than that he desired,  
*Ad sfrisiandum, dicam*, that they hack  
And hew, i' the customary phrase, his wife,  
*Uxorem tantum*, and no harm beside. 1225  
If his instructions then be misconceived,  
Nay, disobeyed, impute you blame to him ?  
Cite me no Panicollus to the point,  
As adverse ! Oh, I quite expect his case—  
How certain noble youths of Sicily 1230

Having good reason to mistrust their wives,  
 Killed them and were absolved in consequence :  
 While others who had gone beyond the need  
 By mutilation of each paramour—  
 As Galba in the Horatian satire grieved 1235  
 —These were condemned to the galleys, cast for guilt  
 Exceeding simple murder of a wife.  
 But why? Because of ugliness, and not  
 Cruelty, in the said revenge, I trow !  
*Ex causa abscissionis partium ;* 1240  
*Qui nempe id facientes reputantur*  
*Naturæ inimici*, man revolts  
 Against them as the natural enemy.  
 Pray, grant to one who meant to slit the nose  
 And slash the cheek and slur the mouth, at most, 1245  
 A somewhat more humane award than these  
 Obtained, these natural enemies of man !  
*Objectum funditus corruit*, flat you fall,  
 My Fisc ! I waste no kick on you, but pass.  
 Third aggravation : that our act was done— 1250  
 Not in the public street, where safety lies,

Not in the bye-place, caution may avoid,  
 Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for crime,—  
 But in the very house, home, nook and nest,  
 O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-place, 1255  
*In domo ac habitatione propria,*  
 Where all presumably is peace and joy.  
 The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a pest  
 When, creeping from congenial cottage, she  
 Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify 1260  
 His household more, i' the palace of the king.  
 All three were housed and safe and confident.  
 Moreover, the permission that our wife  
 Should have at length *domum pro carcere,*  
 Her own abode in place of prison—why, 1265  
 We ourselves granted, by our other self  
 And proxy Paolo : did we make such grant,  
 Meaning a lure ?—elude the vigilance  
 O' the jailor, lead her to commodious death,  
 While we ostensibly relented? 1270

Ay,

Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc !  
 Is vengeance lawful? We demand our right,

But find it will be questioned or refused  
 By jailor, turnkey, hangdog,—what know we? 1275  
 Pray, how is it we should conduct ourselves?  
 To gain our private right—break public peace,  
 Do you bid us?—trouble order with our broils?  
 Endanger . . shall I shrink to own . . ourselves?—  
 Who want no broken head nor bloody nose 1280  
 (While busied slitting noses, breaking heads)  
 From the first tipstaff that may interfere!  
*Nam quicquid sit*, for howsoever it be,  
*An de consensu nostro*, if with leave  
 Or not, *a monasterio*, from the nuns, 1285  
*Educta esset*, she had been led forth,  
*Potuimus id dissimulare*, we  
 May well have granted leave in pure pretence,  
*Ut aditum habere*, that thereby  
 An entry we might compass, a free move 1290  
*Potuissemus*, to her easy death,  
*Ad eam occidendam*. Privacy  
 O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home, say you?  
 Shall we give man's abode more privilege  
 Than God's?—for in the churches where He dwells,

- In quibus assistit Regum Rex*, by means 1296  
 Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the same,  
*Et nihilominus*, therein, *in eis*,  
*Ex justa via delinquens*, whoso dares  
 To take a liberty on ground enough, 1300  
 Is pardoned, *excusatur*: that 's our case—  
 Delinquent through befitting cause. You hold,  
 To punish a false wife in her own house  
 Is graver than, what happens every day,  
 To hale a debtor from his hiding-place 1305  
 In church protected by the Sacrament?  
 To this conclusion have I brought my Fisc?  
 Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their nests;  
 Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?  
 Shall false wife yet have where to lay her head? 1310  
 "*Contra Fiscum definitum est!*" He 's done!  
 "*Surge et scribe,*" make a note of it!  
 —If I may dally with Aquinas' word.  
  
 Or in the death-throe does he mutter still,  
 Fourth aggravation, that we changed our garb, 1315  
 And rusticized ourselves with uncouth hat,

Rough vest and goatskin wrappage ; murdered thus  
*Mutatione vestium*, in disguise,  
 Whereby mere murder got complexed with wile,  
 Turned *homicidium ex insidiis* ? Fisc, 1320  
 How often must I round thee in the ears—  
 All means are lawful to a lawful end ?  
 Concede he had the right to kill his wife :  
 The Count indulged in a travesty ; why ?  
*De illa ut vindictam sumeret*, 1325  
 That on her he might lawful vengeance take,  
*Commodius*, with more ease, *et tutius*,  
 And safelier : wants he warrant for the step ?  
 Read to thy profit how the Apostle once  
 For ease and safety, when Damascus raged, 1330  
 Was let down in a basket by the wall,  
 To 'scape the malice of the governor  
 (Another sort of Governor boasts Rome !)  
 —Many are of opinion,—covered close,  
 Concealed with—what except that very cloak 1335  
 He left behind at Troas afterward ?  
 I shall not add a syllable : Molinists may !



Well, have we more to manage? Ay, indeed!

Fifth aggravation, that our wife reposed

*Sub potestate judicis*, beneath

1340

Protection of the judge,—her house was styled

A prison, and his power became its guard

In lieu of wall and gate and bolt and bar.

This is a tough point, shrewd, redoubtable :

Because we have to supplicate the judge

1345

Shall overlook wrong done the judgment-seat.

Now, I might suffer my own nose be pulled,

As man—but then as father . . if the Fisc

Touched one hair of my boy who held my hand

In confidence he could not come to harm

1350

Crossing the Corso, at my own desire,

Going to see those bodies in the church—

What would you say to that, Don Hyacinth?

This is the sole and single knotty point :

For, bid Tommati blink his interest,

1355

You laud his magnanimity the while :

But baulk Tommati's office,—he talks big!

“ My predecessors in the place,—those sons

“ O' the prophets that may hope succeed me here,—

“ Shall I diminish their prerogative ? 1360  
 “ Count Guido Franceschini’s honour !—well,  
 “ Has the Governor of Rome none ? ”

You perceive,

The cards are all against us. Make a push,  
 Kick over table, as shrewd gamesters do ! 1365  
 We, do you say, encroach upon the rights,  
 Deny the omnipotence o’ the Judge forsooth ?  
 We, who have only been from first to last  
 Intending that his purpose should prevail,  
 Nay, more, at times, anticipating it 1370  
 At risk of his rebuke ?

But wait awhile !

Cannot we lump this with the sixth and last  
 Of the aggravations—that the Majesty  
 O’ the Sovereign here received a wound ? to-wit, 1375  
*Læsa Majestas*, since our violence  
 Was out of envy to the course of law,  
*In odium litis* ? We cut short thereby  
 Three pending suits, promoted by ourselves

I' the main,—which worsens crime, *accedit ad* 1380  
*Exasperationem criminis!*

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full effect!  
 How, did not indignation chain my tongue,  
 Could I repel this last, worst charge of all!  
 (There is a porcupine to barbacue; 1385  
 Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,  
 With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips; but, good  
 Lord,

Suppose the devil instigate the wench  
 To stew, not roast him? Stew my porcupine?  
 If she does, I know where his quills shall stick! 1390  
 Come, I must go myself and see to things:  
 I cannot stay much longer stewing here.)  
 Our stomach . . . I mean, our soul is stirred within,  
 And we want words. We wounded Majesty?  
 Fall under such a censure, we?—who yearned 1395  
 So much that Majesty dispel the cloud  
 And shine on us with healing on her wings,  
 That we prayed Pope *Majestas'* very self  
 To anticipate a little the tardy pack,

Bell us forth deep the authoritative bay 1400  
 Should start the beagles into sudden yelp  
 Unisonous,—and, Gospel leading Law,  
 Grant there assemble in our own behoot  
 A Congregation, a particular Court,  
 A few picked friends of quality and place, 1405  
 To hear the several matters in dispute,  
 Causes big, little and indifferent,  
 Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-growth,  
 All at once (can one brush off such too soon?)  
 And so with laudable dispatch decide 1410  
 Whether we, in the main (to sink detail)  
 Were one the Pope should hold fast or let go.  
 “What, take the credit from the Law?” you ask?  
 Indeed, we did! Law ducks to Gospel here:  
 Why should Law gain the glory and pronounce 1415  
 A judgment shall immortalize the Pope?  
 Yes: our self-abnegating policy  
 Was Joab’s—we would rouse our David’s sloth,  
 Bid him encamp against a city, sack  
 A place whereto ourselves had long laid siege, 1420  
 Lest, taking it at last, it take our name

Nor be styled *Innocentinopolis*.

But no ! The modesty was in alarm,

The temperance refused to interfere,

Returned us our petition with the word 1425

“ *Ad judices suos*,” “ Leave him to his Judge ! ”

As who should say “ Why trouble my repose ?

“ Why consult Peter in a simple case,

“ Peter’s wife’s sister in her fever-fit

“ Might solve as readily as the Apostle’s self ? 1430

“ Are my Tribunals posed by aught so plain ?

“ Hath not my Court a conscience ? It is of age,

“ Ask it ! ”

We do ask,—but, inspire reply

To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I have asked— 1435

Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend

To even the few, the ineffectual words

Which rise from this our low and mundane sphere

Up to thy region out of smoke and noise,

Seeking corroboration from thy nod 1440

Who art all justice—which means mercy too,

In a low noisy smoky world like ours

Where Adam's sin made peccable his seed !  
 We venerate the father of the flock,  
 Whose last faint sands of life, the frittered gold, 1445  
 Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o' the cone  
 And tapering heap of those collected years,—  
 Never have these been hurried in their flow,  
 Though justice fain would jog reluctant arm,  
 In eagerness to take the forfeiture 1450  
 Of guilty life : much less shall mercy sue  
 In vain that thou let innocence survive,  
 Precipitate no minim of the mass  
 O' the all-so precious moments of thy life,  
 By pushing Guido into death and doom ! 1455

(Our Cardinal engages to go read  
 The Pope my speech, and point its beauties out.  
 They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve,  
 Of something like a moderate return  
 Of the intellectuals,—never much to lose !— 1460  
 If I adroitly plant this passage there,  
 The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I think,  
 Though he stand, beat till the old ear-drum break !

—Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,  
 Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the pains 1465  
 Of poor papa, become proficient too  
 I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh,  
 The time to weep, the time, again, to pray,  
 And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ?  
 Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast 1470  
 Our bread upon the waters !)

In a word,

These secondary charges go to ground,  
 Since secondary, and superfluous,—motes  
 Quite from the main point : we did all and some, 1475  
 Little and much, adjunct and principal,  
*Causa honoris.* Is there such a cause  
 As the sake of honour? By that sole test try  
 Our action, nor demand if more or less,  
 Because of the action's mode, we merit blame 1480  
 Or may-be deserve praise ! The Court decides.  
 Is the end lawful? It allows the means :  
 What we may do, we may with safety do,  
 And what means "safety" we ourselves must judge.  
 Put case a person wrongs me past dispute : 1485

If my legitimate vengeance be a blow,  
Mistrusting my bare arm can deal that blow,  
I claim co-operation of a stick ;  
Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave a sword ;  
Diffident of ability in fence, 1490  
I fee a friend, a swordsman to assist :  
Take one—he may be coward, fool or knave :  
Why not take fifty?—and if these exceed  
I' the due degree of drubbing, whom accuse  
But the first author of the aforesaid wrong 1495  
Who put poor me to such a world of pains ?  
Surgery would have just excised a wart ;  
The patient made such pother, struggled so  
That the sharp instrument sliced nose and all.  
Taunt us not that our friends performed for pay ! 1500  
Ourselves, the simple honour's sake sufficed :  
But country clowns want dirt they comprehend,  
The piece of gold ! Our reasons, which suffice  
Ourselves, be ours alone ; our piece of gold  
Be, to the rustic, reason he approves ! 1505  
We must translate our motives like our speech,  
Into the lower phrase that suits the sense



O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let  
 Each level have its language ! Heaven speaks first  
 To the angel, then the angel tames the word 1510  
 Down to the ear of Tobit : he, in turn,  
 Diminishes the message to his dog,  
 And finally that dog finds how the flea  
 (Which else, importunate, might check his speed)  
 Shall learn its hunger must have holiday, 1515  
 By application of his tongue or paw :  
 So many varied sorts of language here,  
 Each following each with pace to match the step,  
*Haud passibus æquis !*

Talking of which flea, 1520

Reminds me I must put 'in special word  
 For the poor humble following,—the four friends,  
*Sicarii*, our assassins caught and caged.  
 Ourselves are safe in your approval now :  
 Yet must we care for our companions, plead 1525  
 The cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-world faith)  
 Who lie in tribulation for our sake.  
*Pauperum Procurator* is my style :

I stand forth as the poor man's advocate :  
 And when we treat of what concerns the poor, 1530  
*Et cum agatur de pauperibus,*  
 In bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,  
*In eorum causis*, natural piety,  
*Pictas*, ever ought to win the day,  
*Triumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt,* 1535  
 Because those very paupers constitute,  
*Thesaurus Christi*, all the wealth of Christ.  
 Nevertheless I shall not hold you long  
 With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn  
 Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear. 1540  
 There beams a case refulgent from our books—  
 Castrensis, Butringarius, everywhere  
 I find it burn to dissipate the dark.  
 'T is this : a husband had a friend, which friend  
 Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife 1545  
 In thought and purpose,—I pretend no more.  
 To justify suspicion or dispel,  
 He bids his wife make show of giving heed,  
 Semblance of sympathy—propose, in fine,  
 A secret meeting in a private place. 1550

The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambuscade,  
To-wit, the husband posted with a pack  
Of other friends, who fall upon the first  
And beat his love and life out both at once.  
These friends were brought to question for their help ;  
Law ruled " The husband being in the right, 1556  
" Who helped him in the right can scarce be wrong "—  
*Opinio*, an opinion every way,  
*Multum tenenda cordi*, heart should hold !  
When the inferiors follow as befits 1560  
The lead o' the principal, they change their name,  
And, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called  
His mandatories, *mandatorii*,  
But helpmates, *sed auxiliares*; since  
To that degree does honour' sake lend aid, 1565  
*Adeo honoris causa est efficax*,  
That not alone, *non solum*, does it pour  
Itself out, *se diffundat*, on mere friends,  
We bring to do our bidding of this sort,  
*In mandatorios simplices*, but sucks 1570  
Along with it in wide and generous whirl,  
*Sed etiam assassinii qualitate*

*Qualificatos*, people qualified

By the quality of assassination's self,

Dare I make use of such neologism,

1575

*Ut utar verbo.*

Haste we to conclude :

Of the other points that favour, leave some few

For Spreti ; such as the delinquents' youth :

One of them falls short, by some months, of age

1580

Fit to be managed by the gallows ; two

May plead exemption from our law's award,

Being foreigners, subjects of the Granduke—

I spare that bone to Spreti, and reserve

Myself the jucier breast of argument—

1585

Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the Fisc,

Who furnished me the tid-bit : he must needs

Play off his privilege and rack the clowns,—

And they, at instance of the rack, confess

All four unanimously made resolve,—

1590

The night o' the murder, in brief minute snatched

Behind the back of Guido as he fled,—

That, since he had not kept his promise, paid

The money for the murder on the spot,  
 So, reaching home again, might please ignore 1595  
 The pact or pay them in improper coin,—  
 They one and all resolved, these hopeful friends,  
 'T were best inaugurate the morrow's light,  
 Nature recruited with her due repose,  
 By killing Guido as he lay asleep 1600  
 Pillowed on wallet which contained their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this fact :  
 What fact could hope to make more manifest  
 Their rectitude, Guido's integrity?  
 For who fails recognise the touching truth 1605  
 That these poor rustics bore no envy, hate,  
 Malice nor yet uncharitableness  
 Against the people they had put to death?  
 In them, did such an act reward itself?  
 All done was to deserve the simple pay, 1610  
 Obtain the bread clowns earn by sweat of brow,  
 And missing which, they missed of everything—  
 Hence claimed pay, even at expense of life  
 To their own lord, so little warped (admire !)

By prepossession, such the absolute 1615  
 Instinct of equity in rustic souls !  
 Whereas our Count, the cultivated mind,  
 He, wholly rapt in his serene regard  
 Of honour, he contemplating the sun,  
 Who hardly marks if taper blink below, 1620  
 He, dreaming of no argument for death  
 Except a vengeance worthy noble hearts,—  
 Dared not so desecrate the deed, forsooth,  
 Vulgarise vengeance, as defray its cost  
 By money dug from out the dirty earth, 1625  
 Irritant mere, in Ovid's phrase, to ill.  
 What though he lured base hinds by lucre's hope,—  
 The only motive they could masticate,  
 Milk for babes, not strong meat which men require ?  
 The deed done, those coarse hands were soiled  
     enough,  
 He spared them the pollution of the pay. 1631  
 So much for the allegement, thine, my Fisc,  
*Quo nil absurdius*, than which nought more mad,  
*Excogitari potest*, may be squeezed  
 From out the cogitative brain of thee ! 1635

And now, thou excellent the Governor !

(Push to the peroration) *cæterum*

*Enixe supplico*, I strive in prayer,

*Ut dominis meis*, that unto the Court,

*Benigna fronte*, with a gracious brow, 1640

*Et oculis serenis*, and mild eyes,

*Perpendere placeat*, it may please them weigh,

*Quod dominus Guido*, that our noble Count,

*Occidit*, did the killing in dispute,

*Ut ejus honor tumultatus*, that 1645

The honour of him buried fathom-deep

In infamy, *in infamia*, might arise,

*Resurgeret*, as ghost breaks sepulchre !

*Occidit*, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife,

*Quia illi fuit*, since she was to him, 1650

*Opprobrio*, a disgrace and nothing more !

*Et genitores*, killed her parents too,

*Qui*, who, *postposita verecundia*,

Having thrown off all sort of decency,

*Filiam repudiarunt*, had renounced 1655

Their daughter, *atque declarare non*

*Erubuerunt*, nor felt blush tinge cheek,

Declaring, *meretricis genitam*  
*Esse*, she was the offspring of a drab,  
*Ut ipse dehonestaretur*, just 1660  
 That so himself might lose his social rank !  
*Cujus mentem*, and which daughter's heart and soul,  
 They, *perverterunt*, turned from the right course,  
*Et ad illicitos amores non*  
*Dumtaxat pellexerunt*, and to love 1665  
 Not simply did alluringly incite,  
*Scd vi obedientiæ*, but by force  
 O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,  
*Coegerunt*, forced and drove her to the deed :  
*Occidit*, I repeat he killed the clan, 1670  
*Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore*,  
 Lest peradventure longer life might trail,  
*Viveret*, link by link his turpitude,  
*Invisus consanguineis*, hateful so  
 To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus* 1675  
*Notatus*, shunned by men of quality,  
*Relictus ab amicis*, left i' the lurch  
 By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned  
 A common hack-block to try edge of jokes.



*Occidit*, and he killed them here in Rome, 1680  
*In Urbe*, the Eternal City, Sirs,  
*Nempe quæ alias spectata est*,  
 The appropriate theatre which witnessed once,  
*Matronam nobilem*, Lucretia's self,  
*Abluere pudicitiae maculas*, 1685  
 Wash off the spots of her pudicity,  
*Sanguine proprio*, with her own pure blood ;  
*Quæ vidit*, and which city also saw,  
*Patrem*, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite,  
*Impunem*, with no sort of punishment, 1690  
 Nor, *et non illaudatum*, lacking praise,  
*Sed pollentem parricidio*,  
 Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filiæ*,  
 Of chaste Virginia, to avoid a rape,  
*Ne raperetur ad stupra* ; so to heart, 1695  
*Tanti illi cordi fuit*, did he take,  
*Suspicio*, the mere fancy men might have,  
*Honoris amittendi*, of fame's loss,  
*Ut potius voluerit filia*  
*Orbari*, he preferred to lose his child, 1700  
*Quam illa incederet*, rather than she walk

The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,  
*Licet non sponte*, though against her will.  
*Occidit*—killed them, I reiterate—  
*In propria domo*, in their own abode, 1705  
*Ut adultera et parentes*, that each wretch,  
*Conscii agnoscerent*, might both see and say,  
*Nullum locum*, there's no place, *nullumque esse*  
*Asylum*, nor yet refuge of escape,  
*Impenetrabilem*, shall serve as bar, 1710  
*Honori læso*, to the wounded one  
 In honour; *neve ibi opprobria*  
*Continuarentur*, killed them on the spot  
 Moreover, dreading lest within those walls  
 The opprobrium peradventure be prolonged, 1715  
*Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium*,  
 And that the domicile which witnessed crime,  
*Esset et pænæ*, might watch punishment :  
*Occidit*, killed, I round you in the ears,  
*Quia alio modo*, since by other mode, 1720  
*Non poterat ejus existimatio*,  
 There was no possibility his fame,  
*Læsa*, gashed griesly, *tam enormiter*,

*Ducere cicatrices*, might be healed :

*Occidit ut exemplum præberet* 1725

*Uxoribus*, killed her, so to lesson wives

*Jura conjugii*, that the marriage-oath,

*Esse servanda*, must be kept henceforth :

*Occidit denique*, killed her, in a word,

*Ut pro posse honestus viveret*, 1730

That he, please God, might creditably live,

*Sin minus*, but if fate willed otherwise,

*Proprii honoris*, of his outraged fame,

*Offensi*, by Mannaja, if you please,

*Commiseranda victima caderet*, 1735

The pitiable victim he should fall !

Done ! I' the rough, i' the rough ! But done ! And, lo,

Landed and stranded lies my very speech,

My miracle, my monster of defence—

Leviathan into the nose whereof 1740

I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with thorn,

And given him to my maidens for a play !

I' the rough : to-morrow I review my piece,

Tame here and there undue floridity.

It 's hard : you have to plead before these priests 1745  
 And poke at them with Scripture, or you pass  
 For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant  
 O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes  
 By way of illustration of the law.  
 To-morrow stick in this, and throw out that, 1750  
 And, having first ecclesiasticized,  
 Regularize the whole, next emphasize,  
 Then latinize and lastly Cicero-ize,  
 Giving my Fisc his finish. There's my speech !  
 And where's my fry, and family and friends ? 1755  
 Where 's that huge Hyacinth I mean to hug  
 Till he cries out, "*Jam satis !* Let me breathe !"  
 Now, what an evening have I earned to-day !  
 Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are false !  
 Oh, the old mother, oh, the fattish wife ! 1760  
 Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,  
 And wrap himself around with mamma's veil  
 Done up to imitate papa's black robe,  
 (I'm in the secret of the comedy,—  
 Part of the program leaked out long ago !) 1765  
 And call himself the Advocate o' the Poor,

Mimic Don father that defends the Count :  
 And for reward shall have a small full glass  
 Of manly red rosolio to himself,  
 —Always provided that he conjugate 1770  
*Bibo*, I drink, correctly—nor be found  
 Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year !  
 How the ambitious do so harden heart  
 As lightly hold by these home-sanctitudes,  
 To me is matter of bewilderment— 1775  
 Bewilderment ! Because ambition's range  
 Is nowise tethered by domestic tie :  
 Am I refused an outlet from my home  
 To the world's stage ?—whereon a man should play  
 The man in public, vigilant for law, 1780  
 Zealous for truth, a credit to his kind,  
 Nay,—since, employing talent so, I yield  
 The Lord His own again with usury,—  
 A satisfaction, yea, to God Himself !  
 Well, I have modelled me by Agur's wish, 1785  
 “ Remove far from me vanity and lies,  
 “ Feed me with food convenient for me ! ” What  
 I' the world should a wise man require beyond ?

- Can I but coax the good fat little wife  
 To tell her fool of a father the mad prank 1790  
 His scapegrace nephew played this time last year  
 At Carnival! He could not choose, I think,  
 But modify that inconsiderate gift  
 O' the cup and cover (somewhere in the will  
 Under the pillow, someone seems to guess) 1795  
 —Correct that clause in favour of a boy  
 The trifle ought to grace, with name engraved,  
 Would look so well, produced in future years  
 To pledge a memory, when poor papa  
 Latin and law are long since laid at rest— 1800  
*Hyacintho dono dedit avus!* Why,  
 The wife should get a necklace for her pains,  
 The very pearls that made Violante proud,  
 And Pietro pawned for half their value once,—  
 Redeemable by somebody, *ne sit* 1805  
*Marita quæ rotundioribus*  
*Onusta mammis. . . baccis ambulet:*  
 Her bosom shall display the big round balls,  
 No braver proudly borne by wedded wife!  
 With which Horatian promise I conclude. 1810

Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my speech !  
Off and away, first work then play, play, play !  
Bottini, burn your books, you blazing ass !  
Sing " Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we must live ! "

## IX.

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-  
BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

HAD I God's leave, how I would alter things !  
 If I might read instead of print my speech,—  
 Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower  
 Refuses obstinately blow in print,  
 As wildings planted in a prim parterre,— 5  
 This scurvy room were turned an immense hall ;  
 Opposite, fifty judges in a row ;  
 This side and that of me, for audience—Rome :  
 And, where yon window is, the Pope should hide—  
 Watch, curtained, but peep visibly enough. 10



A buzz of expectation ! Through the crowd,  
 Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,  
 Up comes an usher, louts him low, " The Court  
 " Requires the allocution of the Fisc !"  
 I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause 15  
 O'er the hushed multitude : I count—One, two—

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Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—  
 When it may hap some painter, much in vogue  
 Throughout our city nutritive of arts,  
 Ye summon to a task shall test his worth, 20  
 And manufacture, as he knows and can,  
 A work may decorate a palace-wall,  
 Afford my lords their Holy Family,—  
 Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court  
 How such a painter sets himself to paint ? 25  
 Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe  
 A-journeying to Egypt, prove the piece :  
 Why, first he sedulously practiseth,  
 This painter,—girding loin and lighting lamp,—

On what may nourish eye, make facile hand ; 30  
 Getteth him studies (styled by draughtsmen so)  
 From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk  
 Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves,—  
 This Luca or this Carlo or the like.  
 To him the bones their inmost secret yield, 35  
 Each notch and nodule signify their use :  
 On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,  
 And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man  
 “ Familiarize thee with our play that lifts  
 “ Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm and foot !” 40  
 —Ensuring due correctness in the nude.  
 Which done, is all done? Not a whit, ye know !  
 He,—to art’s surface rising from her depth,—  
 If some flax-polled soft-bearded sire be found,  
 May simulate a Joseph, (happy chance !) 45  
 Linneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,  
 Loseth no involution, cheek or chap,  
 Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives !  
 Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse  
 That poseth? (be the phrase accorded me !) 50  
 Each feminine delight of florid lip,

Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed down with love,  
 Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous,—  
 Glad on the paper in a trice they go  
 To help his notion of the Mother-maid : 55  
 Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped !  
 Yea and her babe—that flexure of soft limbs,  
 That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,  
 Contribute each an excellence to Christ.  
 Nay, since he humbly lent companionship, 60  
 Even the poor ass, unpanniered and elate  
 Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too ;  
 While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd,—  
 Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste,—  
 No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn 65  
 Ministers to perfection of the piece :  
 Till now, such piece before him, part by part,—  
 Such prelude ended,—pause our painter may,  
 Submit his fifty studies one by one,  
 And in some sort boast “ I have served my lords.” 70

But what? And hath he painted once this while?  
 Or when ye cry “ Produce the thing required,

"Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,  
 "Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils!"—  
 What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets, 75  
 Fumbling for first this, then the other fact  
 Consigned to paper,—“studies,” bear the term!—  
 And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,  
 And fasten here a head and there a tail,  
 (The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-tail 80  
 Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out—  
 By bits of reproduction of the life—  
 The picture, the expected Family?  
 I trow not! do I miss with my conceit  
 The mark, my lords?—not so my lords were served! 85  
 Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,  
 And preferably buries him and broods  
 (Quite away from aught vulgar and extern)  
 On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,  
 His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop, 90  
*E pluribus unum*: and the wiser he!  
 For in that brain,—their fancy sees at work,  
 Could my lords peep indulged,—results alone,  
 Not processes which nourish the result,

Would they discover and appreciate,—life 95  
 Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,  
 No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme  
 Secreted from each snapped-up crudity,—  
 Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole  
 Truer to the subject,—the main central truth 100  
 And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy,—  
 Not those mere fragmentary studied facts  
 Which answer to the outward frame and flesh—  
 Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact  
 Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's clout, 105  
 But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,  
 Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false.  
 The studies—for his pupils and himself!  
 The picture be for our eximious Rome  
 And—who knows?—satisfy its Governor, 110  
 Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought  
 (God give him joy of it) by Capena, soon  
 ('T is bruited) shall be glowing with the brush  
 Of who hath long surpassed the Florentine,  
 The Urbinate and . . . what if I dared add, 115  
 Even his master, yea the Cortonese,—

I mean the accomplished *Ciro Ferri*, *Sirs* !  
(—Did not he die ? I'll see before I print.)

End we exordium, *Phœbus* plucks my ear !  
Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise, 120  
Have I,—engaged as I were *Ciro's* self,  
To paint a parallel, a Family,  
The patriarch *Pietro* with his wise old wife  
To boot (as if one introduced *Saint Anne*  
By bold conjecture to complete the group) 125  
And juvenile *Pompilia* with her babe,  
Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,  
Were all surprised by *Herod*, while outstretched  
In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,  
And killed—the very circumstance I paint, 130  
Moving the pity and terror of my lords—  
Exactly so have I, a month at least,  
Your Fiscal, made me cognizant of facts,  
Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth  
Of every piece of evidence in point, 135  
How bloody *Herod* slew these innocents,—  
Until the glad result is gained, the group

Demonstrably presented in detail,  
 Their slumber and his onslaught,—like as life.  
 Yea and, availing me of help allowed 140  
 By law, discreet provision lest my lords  
 Be too much troubled by effrontery,—  
 The rack, law plies suspected crime withal—  
 (Law that hath listened while the lyrist sang  
 “*Lene tormentum ingenio admoveo,*” 145  
 Gently thou joggest by a twinge the wit,  
 “*Plerumque duro,*” else were slow to blab !)  
 Through this concession my full cup runs o’er :  
 The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.  
 Therefore by part and part I clutch my case 150  
 Which, in entirety now,—momentous task,—  
 My lords demand, so render them I must,  
 Since, one poor pleading more and I have done.  
 But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,  
 Parade my studies, fifty in a row, 155  
 As though the Court were yet in pupilage  
 And not the artist’s ultimate appeal?  
 Much rather let me soar the height prescribed  
 And, bowing low, proffer my picture’s self !

No more of proof, disproof,—such virtue was, 160  
 Such vice was never in Pompilia, now !  
 Far better say “ Behold Pompilia ! ”—(for  
 I leave the family as unmanageable,  
 And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)  
 Hath calumny imputed to the fair 165  
 A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,  
 Much more, blind hidden horrors best unnamed ?  
 Shall I descend to prove you, point by point,  
 Never was knock-knee known nor splay-foot found  
 In Phryne ? (I must let the portrait go, 170  
 Content me with the model, I believe)—  
 —I prove this ? An indignant sweep of hand,  
 Dash at and doing away with drapery,  
 And,—use your eyes, Athenians, smooth she smiles !  
 Or,—since my client can no longer smile, 175  
 And more appropriate instances abound,—  
 What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave  
 Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine ?  
 Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes virginal,  
 Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia ! 180

Thus at least



I, by the guidance of antiquity,  
 (Our one infallible guide) now operate,  
 Sure that the innocency shown is safe ;  
 Sure, too, that, while I plead, the echoes cry 185  
 (Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous Fame !)  
 “ Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall mar,  
 “ Lucretia’s soul comport with Tarquin’s lie,  
 “ When thistles grow on vines or thorns yield figs,  
 “ Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-seat !” 190

A great theme : may my strength be adequate !  
 For—paint Pompilia, dares my feebleness ?  
 How did I unaware engage so much  
 —Find myself undertaking to produce  
 A faultless nature in a flawless form ? 195  
 What’s here ? Oh, turn aside nor dare the blaze  
 Of such a crown, such constellation, say,  
 As jewels here thy front, Humanity !  
 First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl ;  
 Then, childhood—stone which, dew-drop at the first, 200  
 (An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,  
 Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so :

Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last and best,  
 Womanliness and wifehood opaline,  
 Its milk-white pallor,—chastity,—suffused 205  
 With here and there a tint and hint of flame,—  
 Desire,—the lapidary loves to find.  
 Such jewels bind conspicuously thy brow,  
 Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife—  
 Crown the ideal in our earth at last ! 210  
 What should a faculty like mine do here ?  
 Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry hand !

Which is to say,—lose no time but begin !  
*Sermocinando ne declamem*, Sirs,  
*Ultra clepsydrum*, as our preachers say, 215  
 Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Whereupon,  
 As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic plunge—  
 Begin at once with marriage, up till when  
 Little or nothing would arrest your love,  
 In the easeful life o' the lady ; lamb and lamb, 220  
 How do they differ ? Know one, you know all  
 Manners of maidenhood : mere maiden she.  
 And since all lambs are like in more than fleece,

Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too frisks—  
 O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker sex ! 225

To whom, the Teian teaches us, for gift,  
 Not strength,—man's dower,—but beauty, nature gave,  
 " Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of shields ! "

And what is beauty's sure concomitant,  
 Nay, intimate essential character, 230

But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,  
 The whole redoubted armoury of love ?  
 Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevellings  
 O' the hair of youth that dances April in,  
 And easily-imagined Hebe-slips 235

O'er sward which May makes over-smooth for foot—  
 These shall we pry into ?—or wiselier wink,  
 Though numerous and dear they may have been ?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his pomp !  
*Discedunt nunc amores*, loves, farewell ! 240

*Maneat amor*, let love, the sole, remain !  
 Farewell to dewiness and prime of life !  
 Remains the rough determined day : dance done,  
 To work, with plough and harrow ! What comes next ?

'T is Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's step, 245  
 Cries "No more friskings o'er the foodful glebe,  
 "Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordingly,—first crack  
 O' the thong,—we hear that his young wife was barred,  
*Cohibita fuit*, from the old free life,  
*Vitam liberiorem ducere.* 250

Demur we? Nowise: heifer brave the hind?  
 We seek not there should lapse the natural law,  
 The proper piety to lord and king  
 And husband: let the heifer bear the yoke!  
 Only, I crave he cast not patience off, 255  
 This hind; for deem you she endures the whip,  
 Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive, kicks?  
 What if the adversary's charge be just,  
 And all untowardly she pursue her way  
 With groan and grunt, though hind strike ne'er so hard?  
 If petulant remonstrance made appeal, 261  
 Unseasonable, o'erprotracted,—if  
 Importunate challenge taxed the public ear  
 When silence more decorously had served  
 For protestation,—if Pompilian plaint 265  
 Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire,—

Why, such mishaps, ungainly though they be,  
 Ever companion change, are incident  
 To altered modes and novelty of life :  
 The philosophic mind expects no less, 270  
 Smilingly knows and names the crisis, sits  
 Waiting till old things go and new arrive.  
 Therefore, I hold a husband but inept  
 Who turns impatient at such transit-time,  
 As if this running from the rod would last ! 275

Since, even while I speak, the end is reached :  
 Success awaits the soon-disheartened man.  
 The parents turn their backs and leave the house,  
 The wife may wail but none shall intervene :  
 He hath attained his object, groom and bride 280  
 Partake the nuptial bower no soul can see,  
 Old things are passed and all again is new,  
 Over and gone the obstacles to peace,  
*Novorum*—tenderly the Mantuan turns  
 The expression, some such purpose in his eye— 285  
*Nascitur ordo !* Every storm is laid,  
 And forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,

Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late :

(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant and wife, 290

Flowers,—after a suppression to good end,

Still, when they do spring forth,—sprout here, spread  
there,

Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot

O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground ?

He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered,—still 295

'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.

Just so, respecting persons not too much,

The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm

And proper floweret of feminity

To whosoever had a nose to smell 300

Or breast to deck : what if the charge be true ?

The fault were graver had she looked with choice,

Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,

Who, in the whole town, go without the prize !

To nobody she destined donative, 305

But, first come was first served, the accuser saith.

Put case her sort of . . in this kind . . escapes

Were many and oft and indiscriminate—  
 Impute ye as the action were prepense,  
 The gift particular, arguing malice so? 310  
 Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag  
 “ I was preferred to Guido ”—when 't is clear  
 The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent breast  
 Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as well?  
 One chalice entertained the company ; 315  
 And if its peevish lord object the more,  
 Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,  
 Haste we to advertise him—charm of cheek,  
 Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,  
 All womanly components in a spouse, 320  
 These are no household-bread each stranger's bite  
 Leaves by so much diminished for the mouth  
 O' the master of the house at supper-time :  
 But rather like a lump of spice they lie,  
 Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neighbourhood 325  
 Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied !  
 Concede we there was reason in his wrong,

Grant we his grievance and content the man !  
 For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself ; 330  
 Ere three revolving years have crowned their course,  
 Off and away she puts this same reproach  
 Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift  
 O' the sweets of wifehood stored to other ends :  
 No longer shall he blame " She none excludes," 335  
 But substitute " She laudably sees all,  
 " Searches the best out and selects the same."  
 For who is here, long sought and latest found,  
 Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,  
 " *Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords ? 340  
 Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip !—  
 Since 't is a levite bears the bell away,  
 Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's choice.  
 'T is no ignoble object, husband ! Doubt'st ?  
 When here comes tripping Flaccus with his phrase 345  
 " Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,  
 " *Crede non illum tibi de scelestis*  
 " *Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,  
 A priest, dost hear ? Why then, submit thyself !  
 Priest, ay and very phoenix of such fowl, 350



Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,  
 Comely too, since precise the precept points—  
 On the selected levite be there found  
 Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the mind  
 Come all uncandid through the thwarting flesh ! 355  
 Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,  
 Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way ?  
 Since well he smote the harp and sweetly sang,  
 And danced till Abigail came out to see,  
 And seeing smiled and smiling ministered 360  
 The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,  
 With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,  
 Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,  
 Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly done—  
 They might have been beforehand with him else) 365  
 And died—would Guido have behaved as well !  
 But ah, the faith of early days is gone,  
*Heu prisca fides !* Nothing died in him  
 Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,  
 Which, when they ebb from souls they should o'erflow,  
 Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness. 371  
 (The Pope, you know, is Neapolitan

And relishes a sea-side simile.)

Deserted by each charitable wave,

Guido, left high and dry, shows jealous now ! 375

Jealous avouched, paraded : tax the fool

With any peccadillo, he responds

“ Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,

“ Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,

“ Being jealous: now would threaten, sword in hand, 380

“ Now manage to mix poison in her sight,

“ And so forth : jealously I dealt, in fine.”

Concede thus much, and what remains to prove ?

Have I to teach my masters what effect

Hath jealousy, and how, befooling men, 385

It makes false true, abuses eye and ear,

Turns mere mist adamantine, loads with sound

Silence, and into void and vacancy

Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring foes ?

Therefore who owns “ I watched with jealousy 390

“ My wife,” adds “ for no reason in the world ! ”

What need that who says “ Madman ” should remark

“ The thing I thought a serpent proved an eel ? ”—

Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot length,

And not an inch too long for that same pie 395  
 (Master Arcangeli has heard of such)  
 Whose succulence makes fasting bearable ;  
 Meant to regale some moody splenetic  
 Who, pleasing to mistake the donor's gift,  
 Spying I know not what Lernæan snake 400  
 I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps forsooth  
 The dainty in the dust.

Enough ! Prepare,  
 Such luncs announced, for downright lunacy !  
*Insanit homo*, threat succeeds to threat, 405  
 And blow redoubles blow,—his wife, the block.  
 But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand  
 That buffets her ? The injurious idle stone  
 Rebounds and hits the head of him who flung.  
 Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now, rageful cause, 410  
 Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.  
 Rebellion, say I ?—rather, self-defence,  
 Laudable wish to live and see good days,  
 Pricks our Pompilia now to fly the fool  
 By any means, at any price,—nay, more, 415

Nay, most of all, i' the very interest  
 O' the fool that, baffled of his blind desire  
 At any price, were truliest victor so.

Shall he effect his crime and lose his soul ?

No, dictates duty to a loving wife ! 420

Far better that the unconsummated blow,  
 Adroitly baulked by her, should back again,  
 Correctively admonish his own pate !

Crime then,—the Court is with me?—she must crush ;

How crush it ? By all efficacious means ; 425

And these,—why, what in woman should they be ?

“ With horns the bull, with teeth the lion fights,

“ To woman,” quoth the lyrist quoted late,

“ Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty, Nature gave ! ”

Pretty i' the Pagan ! Who dares blame the use 430

Of the armoury thus allowed for natural,—

Exclaim against a seeming-dubious play

O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and shield

Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance

By poor Pompilia ? Grant she somewhat plied 435

Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,

The witchery of gesture, spell of word,  
 Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,  
 Yet stranger, as a champion on her side ?  
 Such man, being but mere man, ('t was all she knew), 440  
 Must be made sure by beauty's silken bond,  
 The weakness that subdues the strong, and bows  
 Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the tale  
 O' the husband, which is false, were proved and true  
 To the letter—or the letters, I should say, 445  
 Abominations he professed to find  
 And fix upon Pompilia and the priest,—  
 Allow them hers—for though she could not write,  
 In early days of Eve-like innocence  
 That plucked no apple from the knowledge-tree, 450  
 Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks and eats  
 And knows—especially how to read and write :  
 And so Pompilia,—as the move o' the maw,  
 Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid “ Good day ! ”  
 A crow salute the concave, and a pie 455  
 Endeavour at proficiency in speech,—  
 So she, through hunger after fellowship,  
 May well have learned, though late, to play the scribe :

As indeed, there's one letter on the list  
 Explicitly declares did happen here. 460  
 "You thought my letters could be none of mine,"  
 She tells her parents—"mine, who wanted skill;  
 "But now I have the skill, and write, you see!"  
 She needed write love-letters, so she learned,  
 "*Negatas artifex sequi voces*"—though 465  
 This letter nowise 'scapes the common lot,  
 But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,  
 Found by the husband's self who forged them all.  
 Yet, for the sacredness of argument,  
 For this once an exemption shall it plead— 470  
 Anything, anything to let the wheels  
 Of argument run glibly to their goal!  
 Concede she wrote (which were preposterous)  
 This and the other epistle,—what of it?  
 Where does the figment touch her candid fame? 475  
 Being in peril of her life—"my life,  
 "Not an hour's purchase," as the letter runs,—  
 And having but one stay in this extreme,  
 Out of the wide world but a single friend—  
 What could she other than resort to him, 480

And how with any hope resort but thus ?  
 Shall modesty dare bid a stranger brave  
 Danger, disgrace, nay death in her behalf—  
 Think to entice the sternness of the steel  
 Yet spare love, loadstone moving manly mind ? 485  
 —Most of all, when such mind is hampered so  
 By growth of circumstance athwart the life  
 O' the natural man, that decency forbids  
 He stoop and take the common privilege,  
 Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar do. 490  
 A man is wedded to philosophy,  
 Married to statesmanship ; a man is old ;  
 A man is fettered by the foolishness  
 He took for wisdom and talked ten years since ;  
 A man is, like our friend the Canon here, 495  
 A priest, and wicked if he break his vow :  
 Shall he dare love, who may be Pope one day ?  
 Despite the coil of such encumbrance here,  
 Suppose this man could love, unhappily,  
 And would love, dared he only let love show ! 500  
 In case the woman of his love, speaks first,  
 From what embarrassment she sets him free !

" 'T is I who break reserve, begin appeal,  
 " Confess that, whether you love me or no,  
 " I love you ! " What an ease to dignity, 505  
 What help of pride from the hard high-backed chair  
 Down to the carpet where the kittens bask,  
 All under the pretence of gratitude !

From all which, I deduce—the lady here  
 Was bound to proffer nothing short of love 510  
 To the priest whose service was to save her. What ?  
 Shall she propose him lucre, dust o' the mine,  
 Rubbish o' the rock, some diamond, muckworms prize,  
 Some pearl secreted by a sickly fish ?  
 Scarcely ! She caters for a generous taste. 515  
 'T is love shall beckon, beauty bid to breast,  
 Till all the Samson sink into the snare !  
 Because, permit the end—permit therewith  
 Means to the end !

How say you, good my lords ? 520

I hope you heard my adversary ring  
 The changes on this precept : now, let me  
 Reverse the peal ! *Quia dato licito fine,*



*Ad illum assequendum ordinata*

*Non sunt damnanda media*,—licit end 525

Enough in the escape from death, I hope,  
To legalize the means illicit else  
Of feigned love, false allurements, fancied fact.

Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,  
(See that *Idyllium Moschi*) seeking help, 530

In the anxiety of motherhood,  
Allowably promised "Who shall bring report

"Where he is wandered to, my winged babe,

"I give him for reward a nectared kiss ;

"But who brings safely back the truant's self, 535

"His be a super-sweet makes kiss seem cold !"

Are not these things writ for example-sake ?

To such permitted motive, then, refer

All those professions, else were hard explain,  
Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest of love ! 540

He is Myrtillus, Amaryllis she,

She burns, he freezes,—all a mere device

To catch and keep the man, may save her life,

Whom otherwise nor catches she nor keeps !

Worst, once, turns best now : in all faith, she feigns : 545  
 Feigning,—the liker innocence to guilt,  
 The truer to the life is what she feigns !  
 How if Ulysses,—when, for public good  
 He sunk particular qualms and played the spy,  
 Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's garb— 550  
 How if he first had boggled at this clout,  
 Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish ? Grime is grace  
 To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.

Hence, beyond promises, we praise each proof  
 That promise was not simply made to break, 555  
 Mere moonshine-structure meant to fade at dawn :  
 We praise, as consequent and requisite,  
 What, enemies allege, were more than words,  
 Deeds—meetings at the window, twilight-trysts,  
 Nocturnal entertainments in the dim 560  
 Old labyrinthine palace ; lies, we know—  
 Inventions we, long since, turned inside out.  
 Must such external semblance of intrigue  
 Demonstrate that intrigue there lurks perdue ?  
 Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut ? 565

He were a Molinist who dared maintain  
 That midnight meetings in a screened alcove  
 Must argue folly in a matron—since  
 So would he bring a slur on Judith's self,  
 Commended beyond women, that she lured 570  
 The lustful to destruction through his lust.  
 Pompilia took not Judith's liberty,  
 No faulchion find you in her hand to smite,  
 No damsel to convey in dish the head  
 Of Holophernes,—style the Canon so— 575  
 Or is it the Count? If I entangle me  
 With my similitudes,—if wax wings melt,  
 And earthward down I drop, not mine the fault :  
 Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,  
 Whereof the beamy smile affects my flight ! 580  
 What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive  
 I' the warmth that proves the bane of Icarus ?

Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary  
 Pompilia leave her husband, seek the house  
 O' the parents : and because 'twixt home and home 585  
 Lies a long road with many a danger rife,

Lions by the way and serpents in the path,  
 To rob and ravish,—much behoves she keep  
 Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame,  
 For her own sake much, but for his sake more,           590  
 The ingrate husband : Evidence shall be,  
 Some witness to the world how white she walks  
 I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome she reach.  
 And who so proper witness as a priest ?  
 Gainsay ye ? Let me hear who dares gainsay !           595  
 I hope we still can punish heretics !  
 “ Give me the man ” I say with him of Gath,  
 “ That we may fight together ! ” None, I think :  
 The priest is granted me.

Then, if a priest,           600

One juvenile and potent : else, mayhap,  
 That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him.  
 And should fair face accompany strong hand,  
 The more complete equipment : nothing mars  
 Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw           605  
 I' the worker : as 't is said Saint Paul himself  
 Deplored the check o' the puny presence, still

Cheating his fulmination of its flash,  
 Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.  
 Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she takes,— 610  
 Both juvenile and potent, handsome too,—  
 In all obedience : “ good,” you grant again.  
 Do you? I would you were the husband, lords !  
 How prompt and facile might departure be !  
 How boldly would Pompilia and the priest 615  
 March out of door, spread flag at beat of drum,  
 But that inapprehensive Guido grants  
 Neither premiss nor yet conclusion here,  
 And, purblind, dreads a bear in every bush !  
 For his own quietude and comfort, then, 620  
 Means must be found for flight in masquerade  
 At hour when all things sleep.—“ Save jealousy !”  
 Right, Judges ! Therefore shall the lady’s wit  
 Supply the boon thwart nature baulks him of,  
 And do him service with the potent drug 625  
 (Helen’s nepenthe, as my lords opine)  
 Which respites blessedly each fretted nerve  
 O’ the much-enduring man : accordingly,  
 There lies he, duly dosed and sound asleep,

Relieved of woes, or real or raved about. 630  
 While soft she leaves his side, he shall not wake ;  
 Nor stop who steals away to join her friend,  
 Nor do him mischief should he catch that friend  
 Intent on more than friendly office,—nay,  
 Nor get himself raw head and bones laid bare 635  
 In payment of his apparition !

Thus

Would I defend the step,—were the thing true  
 Which is a fable,—see my former speech,—  
 That Guido slept (who never slept a wink) 640  
 Through treachery, an opiate from his wife,  
 Who not so much as knew what opiates mean.

Now she may start : or hist,—a stoppage still !  
 A journey is an enterprise of cost !  
 As in campaigns, we fight but others pay, 645  
*Suis expensis, nemo militat.*  
 'T is Guido's self we guard from accident,  
 Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed  
 Nowise in misadventures by the way,

Hard riding and rough quarters, the rude fare, 650  
 The unready host. What magic mitigates  
 Each plague of travel to the unpractised wife?  
 Money, sweet Sirs! And were the fiction fact,  
 She helped herself thereto with liberal hand  
 From out her husband's store,—what fitter use 655  
 Was ever husband's money destined to?  
 With bag and baggage thus did Dido once  
 Decamp,—for more authority, a queen!

So is she fairly on her route at last,  
 Prepared for either fortune: nay and if 660  
 The priest, now all a-glow with enterprise,  
 Cool somewhat presently when fades the flush  
 O' the first adventure, clouded o'er belike  
 By doubts, misgivings how the day may die,  
 Though born with such auroral brilliance,—if 665  
 The brow seem over-pensive and the lip  
 'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsome late,—  
 Vanquished by tedium of a prolonged jaunt  
 In a close carriage o'er a jolting road,  
 With only one young female substitute 670

For seventeen other Canons of ripe age  
 Were wont to keep him company in church,—  
 Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate  
 The silent cloud that, gathering, bodes her bale?—  
 Prop the irresoluteness, may portend 675  
 Suspension of the project, check the flight,  
 Bring ruin on them both? Use every means,  
 Since means to the end are lawful! What i' the way  
 Of wile should have allowance like a kiss  
 Sagely and sisterly administered, 680  
*Sororia saltem oscula?* We find  
 Such was the remedy her wit applied  
 To each incipient scruple of the priest,  
 If we believe,—as, while my wit is mine  
 I cannot,—what the driver testifies, 685  
 Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool  
 Of Guido and his friend the Governor,—  
 Avowal I proved wrung from out the wretch,  
 After long rotting in imprisonment,  
 As price of liberty and favour: long 690  
 They tempted, he at last succumbed, and lo  
 Counted them out full tale each kiss and more,



" The journey being one long embrace," quoth he.  
 Still, though we should believe the driver's lie,  
 Nor even admit as probable excuse, 695  
 Right reading of the riddle,—as I urged  
 In my first argument, with fruit perhaps—  
 That what the owl-like eyes (at back of head !)  
 O' the driver, drowsed by driving night and day,  
 Supposed a vulgar interchange of lips, 700  
 This was but innocent jog of head 'gainst head,  
 Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch pear  
 From branch and branch contiguous in the wind,  
 When Autumn blusters and the orchard rocks :—  
 That rapid run and the rough road were cause 705  
 O' the casual ambiguity, no harm  
 I' the world to eyes awake and penetrative :—  
 Say,—not to grasp a truth I can release  
 And safely fight without, yet conquer still,—  
 Say, she kissed him, say, he kissed her again ! 710  
 Such osculation was a potent means,  
 A very efficacious help, no doubt :  
 Such with a third part of her nectar did  
 Venus imbue : why should Pompilia fling

The poet's declaration in his teeth?— 715  
 Pause to employ what,—since it had success,  
 And kept the priest her servant to the end,—  
 We must presume of energy enough,  
 No whit superfluous, so permissible?

The goal is gained : day, night and yet a day 720  
 Have run their round : a long and devious road  
 Is traversed,—many manners, various men  
 Passed in view, what cities did they see,  
 What hamlets mark, what profitable food  
 For after-meditation cull and store ! 725  
 Till Rome, that Rome whereof—this voice  
 Would it might make our Molinists observe,  
 That she is built upon a rock nor shall  
 Their powers prevail against her !—Rome, I say,  
 Is all but reached ; one stage more and they stop 730  
 Saved : pluck up heart, ye pair, and forward, then !

Ah, Nature—baffled she recurs, alas !  
 Nature imperiously exacts her due,  
 Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak :

Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon, 735  
 Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-while.  
 The innocent sleep soundly : sound she sleeps,  
 So let her slumber, then, unguarded save  
 By her own chastity, a triple mail,  
 And his good hand whose stalwart arms have borne 740  
 The sweet and senseless burthen like a babe  
 From coach to coach,—the serviceable strength ! *u/*  
 Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly  
 On the pale beauty prisoned in embrace,  
 Stooped over, stole a balmy breath perhaps 745  
 For more assurance sleep was not decease—  
 “ *Ut vidi,*” “ how I saw !” succeeded by  
 “ *Ut perii,*” “ how I sudden lost my brains !”  
 —What harm ensued to her unconscious quite ?  
 For, curiosity—how natural ! 750  
 Importunateness—what a privilege  
 In the ardent sex ! And why curb ardour here ?  
 How can the priest but pity whom he saved ?  
 And pity is so near to love, and love  
 So neighbourly to all unreasonableness ! 755  
 As to love’s object, whether love were sage

Or foolish, could Pompilia know or care,  
 Being still sound asleep, as I premised?  
 Thus the philosopher absorbed by thought,  
 Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book 760  
 The while besiegers sacked his Syracuse,  
 Was ignorant of the imminence o' the point  
 O' the sword till it surprised him : let it stab,  
 And never knew himself was dead at all.  
 So sleep thou on, secure whate'er betide ! 765  
 For thou, too, hast thy problem hard to solve—  
 How so much beauty is compatible  
 With so much innocence !

Fit place, methinks,

While in this task she rosily is lost, 770  
 To treat of and repel objection here  
 Which,—frivolous, I grant,—my mind misgives,  
 May somehow still have flitted, gadfly-like,  
 And teased the Court at times—as if, all said  
 And done, there seemed, the Court might nearly say,  
 In a certain acceptation, somewhat more 776  
 Of what may pass for insincerity,

Falsehood, throughout the course Pompilia took,  
 Than befits Christian. Pagans held, we know,  
 Man always ought to aim at good and truth, 780  
 Not always put one thing in the same words :  
*Non idem semper dicere sed spectare*  
*Debemus.* But the Pagan yoke was light ;  
 “ Lie not at all,” the exacter precept bids :  
 Each least lie breaks the law,—is sin, we hold. 785  
 I humble me, but venture to submit—  
 What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure :  
 And sin, which hinders sin of deeper dye,  
 Softens itself away by contrast so.  
 Conceive me ! Little sin, by none at all, 790  
 Were properly condemned for great : but great,  
 By greater, dwindles into small again.  
 Now, what is greatest sin of womanhood ?  
 That which unwomans it, abolishes  
 The nature of the woman,—impudence. 795  
 Who contradicts me here ? Concede me, then,  
 Whatever friendly fault may interpose  
 To save the sex from self-abolishment  
 Is three-parts on the way to virtue’s rank !

And, what is taxed here as duplicity, 800  
 Feint, wile and trick,—admitted for the nonce,—  
 What worse do one and all than interpose,  
 Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,  
 Statuesquely, in the Medicean mode,  
 Before some shame which modesty would veil? 805  
 Who blames the gesture prettily perverse?  
 Thus,—let ye miss a point illustrative,—  
 Admit the husband's calumny—allow  
 That the wife, having penned the epistle fraught  
 With horrors, charge on charge of crime she heaped  
 O' the head of Pietro and Violante—(still 811  
 Presumed her parents)—having dispatched the same  
 To their arch-enemy Paolo, through free choice  
 And no sort of compulsion in the world—  
 Put case she next discards simplicity 815  
 For craft, denies the voluntary act,  
 Declares herself a passive instrument  
 I' the husband's hands; that, duped by knavery,  
 She traced the characters she could not write,  
 And took on trust the unread sense which, read, 820  
 And recognized were to be spurned at once:

Allow this calumny, I reiterate !  
 Who is so dull as wonder at the pose  
 Of our Pompilia in the circumstance ?  
 Who sees not that the too-ingenuous soul, 825  
 Repugnant even at a duty done  
 Which brought beneath too scrutinizing glare  
 The misdemeanours,—buried in the dark,—  
 Of the authors of her being, as believed,—  
 Stung to the quick at her impulsive deed, 830  
 And willing to repair what harm it worked,  
 She—wise in this beyond what Nero proved,  
 Who, when folks urged the candid juvenile  
 To sign the warrant, doom the guilty dead,  
 “ Would I had never learned to write,” quoth he ! 835  
 —Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried  
 “ To read or write I never learned at all !”  
 O splendidly mendacious !

But time fleets :

Let us not linger : hurry to the end, 840  
 Since flight does end and that, disastrously.  
 Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess,

Disparage each expedient else to praise,  
Call failure folly! Man's best effort fails.  
After ten years' resistance Troy succumbed : 845  
Could valour save a town, Troy still had stood.  
Pompilia came off halting in no point  
Of courage, conduct, her long journey through :  
But nature sank exhausted at the close,  
And, as I said, she swooned and slept all night. 850  
Morn breaks and brings the husband : we assist  
At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds.  
Ha, how is this? What moonstruck rage is here?  
Though we confess to partial frailty now,  
To error in a woman and a wife, 855  
Is 't by the rough way she shall be reclaimed?  
Who bursts upon her chambered privacy?  
What crowd profanes the chaste *cubiculum*?  
What outcries and lewd laughter, scurril gibe  
And ribald jest to scare the ministrant 860  
Good angels that commerce with souls in sleep?  
Why, had the worst crowned Guido to his wish,  
Confirmed his most irrational surmise,  
Yet there be bounds to man's emotion, checks



To an immoderate astonishment. 865  
 'T is decent horror, regulated wrath,  
 Befit our dispensation: have we back  
 The old Pagan licence? Shall a Vulcan clap  
 His net o' the sudden and expose the pair  
 To the unquenchable universal mirth? 870  
 A feat, antiquity saw scandal in  
 So clearly, that the nauseous tale thereof—  
 Demodocus his nugatory song—  
 Hath ever been concluded modern stuff  
 Impossible to the mouth of the grave Muse, 875  
 So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey  
 By some impertinent pickthank. O thou fool,  
 Count Guido Franceschini, what didst gain  
 By publishing thy secrets to the world?  
 Were all the precepts of the wise a waste— 880  
 Bred in thee not one touch of reverence?  
 Admit thy wife—admonish we the fool,—  
 Were falseness' self, why chronicle thy shame?  
 Much rather should thy teeth bite out thy tongue,  
 Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow, 885  
 Silence become historiographer,

And thou—thine own Cornelius Tacitus!  
 But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords!  
 —Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist  
 And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know! 890  
 Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,  
 Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,  
 Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,  
 Confronts the foe,—nay, catches at his sword  
 And tries to kill the intruder, he complains. 895  
 Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,  
 Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way,  
 With an exact obedience; he brought sword,  
 She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.  
 Tell not me 't is sharp play with tools on edge! 900  
 It was the husband chose the weapon here.  
 Why did not he inaugurate the game  
 With some gentility of apophthegm  
 Still pregnant on the philosophic page,  
 Some captivating cadence still a-lisp 905  
 O' the poet's lyre? Such spells subdue the surge,  
 Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate  
 The passions of the mind, and probably

Had moved Pompilia to a smiling blush.  
 No, he must needs prefer the argument 910  
 O' the blow: and she obeyed, in duty bound,  
 Returned him buffet ratiocinative—  
 Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,  
 For wife must follow whither husband leads,  
 Vindicate honour as himself prescribes, 915  
 Save him the very way himself bids save!  
 No question but who jumps into a quag  
 Should stretch forth hand and pray one " Pull me out  
 " By the hand!" such were the customary cry:  
 But Guido pleased to bid " Leave hand alone! 920  
 " Join both feet, rather, jump upon my head:  
 " I extricate myself by the rebound!"  
 And dutifully as enjoined she jumped—  
 Drew his own sword and menaced his own life,  
 Anything to content a wilful spouse. 925

And so he was contented—one must do  
 Justice to the expedient which succeeds,  
 Strange as it seem: at flourish of the blade,  
 The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,

Then murmured " This should be no wanton wife, 930  
 " No conscience-stricken sinner, caught i' the act,  
 " And patiently awaiting our first stone :  
 " But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,  
 " Has rushed so far, misguidely perhaps,  
 " Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep. 935  
 " She sought for aid ; and if she made mistake  
 " I' the man could aid most, why—so mortals do :  
 " Even the blessed Magdalen mistook  
 " Far less forgiveably : consult the place—  
 " Supposing him to be the gardener, 940  
 " ' Sir,' said she, and so following." Why more words ?  
 Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent :  
 What would the husband more than gain his cause,  
 And find that honour flash in the world's eye,  
 His apprehension was lest soil had smirched ? 945  
  
 So, happily the adventure comes to close  
 Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge  
 Preposterous : at mid-day he groans " How dark !"  
 Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine !  
 Where is the ambiguity to blame, 950

The flaw to find in our Pompilia? Safe  
 She stands, see! Does thy comment follow quick  
 " Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed ;  
 " But thither she picked way by devious path—  
 " Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all! 955  
 " I recognize success, yet, all the same,  
 " Importunately will suggestion prick—  
 " Better Pompilia gained the right to boast  
 " ' No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,  
 " ' I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot!' 960  
 " Why, being in a peril, show mistrust  
 " Of the angels set to guard the innocent?  
 " Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help  
 " Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused  
 " Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault, 965  
 " Since low with high, and good with bad is linked?  
 " Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.  
 " There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,  
 " Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,  
 " Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest, 970  
 " At a safe distance both distressful watch,  
 " While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.

" I look that, white and perfect to the end,  
 " She wait till Jove despatch some demigod ;  
 " Not that,—impatient of celestial club 975  
 " Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast,—  
 " She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,  
 " And so elude the purblind monster ! Ay,  
 " The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,  
 " Where needs have been no trick !" 980

My answer? Faugh ;

*Nimis incongrue!* Too absurdly put !

*Sententiam ego tenco contrariam,*

Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.

The heavens were bound with brass,—Jove far at feast  
 (No feast like that thou didst not ask me to, 986  
 Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !)

With the unblamed Æthiop,—Hercules spun wool  
 I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked—  
 The brute came paddling all the faster. You 990  
 Of Troy, who stood at distance, where 's the aid  
 You offered in the extremity? Most and least,  
 Gentle and simple, here the Governor,

There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,  
 Shook heads and waited for a miracle, 995  
 Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.  
 Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth !  
 —Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)  
 Who restored things, with no delay at all,  
*Qui haud cunctando, rem restituit !* He, 1000  
 He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,  
 Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off  
 Through gaping impotence of sympathy  
 In ranged Arezzo : what you take for pitch,  
 Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue, 1005  
 Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands  
 Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe  
 Was more than duly energetic : bruised,  
 She smarts a little, but her bones are saved  
 A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek. 1010  
 How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,  
 Censures the honest rude effective strength,—  
 When sickly dreamers of the impossible  
 Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat  
 With eyes wide open ! 1015

Did occasion serve,

I could illustrate, if my lords allow ;  
*Quid vetat*, what forbids I aptly ask  
 With Horace, that I give my anger vent,  
 While I let breathe, no less, and recreate, 1020  
 The gravity of my Judges, by a tale ?  
 A case in point—what though an apologue  
 Graced by tradition ?—possibly a fact :  
 Tradition must precede all scripture, words  
 Serve as our warrant ere our books can be : 1025  
 So, to tradition back we needs must go  
 For any fact's authority : and this  
 Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in muck)  
 On page of that old lying vanity  
 Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu : " God be praised,  
 I read no Hebrew,—take the thing on trust : 1031  
 But I believe the writer meant no good  
 (Blind as he was to truth in some respects)  
 To our pestiferous and schismatic . . well,  
 My lords' conjecture be the touchstone, show 1035  
 The thing for what it is ! The author lacks  
 Discretion, and his zeal exceeds : but zeal,—



How rare in our degenerate day ! Enough !  
 Here is the story : fear not, I shall chop  
 And change a little, else my Jew would press 1040  
 All too unmannerly before the Court.

It happened once,—begins this foolish Jew,  
 Pretending to write Christian history,—  
 That three, held greatest, best and worst of men,  
 Peter and John and Judas, spent a day 1045  
 In toil and travel through the country-side  
 On some sufficient business—I suspect,  
 Suppression of some Molinism i' the bud.  
 Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with fatigue,  
 They reached by nightfall a poor lonely grange, 1050  
 Hostel or inn : so, knocked and entered there.  
 “ Your pleasure, great ones ? ” — “ Shelter, rest and food ! ”  
 For shelter, there was one bare room above ;  
 For rest therein, three beds of bundled straw :  
 For food, one wretched starveling fowl, no more— 1055  
 Meat for one mouth, but mockery for three.  
 “ You have my utmost.” How should supper serve ?  
 Peter broke silence : “ To the spit with fowl !

- " And while 't is cooking, sleep !—since beds there be,  
 " And, so far, satisfaction of a want. 1060  
 " Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-time,  
 " Then each of us narrate the dream he had,  
 " And he whose dream shall prove the happiest, point  
 " The clearliest out the dreamer as ordained  
 " Beyond his fellows to receive the fowl, 1065  
 " Him let our shares be cheerful tribute to,  
 " His the entire meal, may it do him good !"  
 Who could dispute so plain a consequence ?  
 So said, so done : each hurried to his straw,  
 Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed his dream, and woke.  
 " I," commenced John, " dreamed that I gained the  
     prize 1071  
 " We all aspire to : the proud place was mine,  
 " Throughout the earth and to the end of time  
 " I was the Loved Disciple : mine the meal !"  
 " But I," proceeded Peter, " dreamed, a word 1075  
 " Gave me the headship of our company,  
 " Made me the Vicar and Vice-regent, gave  
 " The keys of heaven and hell into my hand,  
 " And o'er the earth, dominion : mine the meal !"

- " While I," submitted in soft under-tone 1080  
 The Iscariot—sense of his unworthiness  
 Turning each eye up to the inmost white—  
 With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both lips smack,  
 " I have had just the pitifullest dream  
 " That ever proved man meanest of his mates, 1085  
 " And born foot-washer and foot-wiper, nay  
 " Foot-kisser to each comrade of you all !  
 " I dreamed I dreamed ; and in that mimic dream  
 " (Impalpable to dream as dream to fact)  
 " Methought I meanly chose to sleep no wink 1090  
 " But wait until I heard my brethren breathe ;  
 " Then stole from couch, slipped noiseless to the door,  
 " Slid downstairs, furtively approached the hearth,  
 " Found the fowl duly brown, both back and breast,  
 " Hissing in harmony with the cricket's chirp, 1095  
 " Grilled to a point ; said no grace but fell to,  
 " Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.  
 " In penitence for which ignoble dream,  
 " Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully !  
 " Fie on the flesh—be mine the ethereal gust, 1100  
 " And yours the sublunary sustenance !

“ See that whate’er be left ye give the poor ! ”

Down the two scuttled, one on other’s heel,  
 Stung by a fell surmise ; and found, alack,  
 A goodly savour, both the drumstick bones, 1105  
 And that which henceforth took the appropriate name  
 O’ the Merry-thought, in memory of the fact  
 That to keep wide awake is our best dream.

So,—as was said once of Thucydides  
 And his sole joke, “ The lion, lo, hath laughed ! ”— 1110  
 Just so, the Governor and all that ’s great  
 I’ the city, never meant that Innocence  
 Should quite starve while Authority sat at meat ;  
 They meant to fling a bone at banquet’s end :  
 Wished well to our Pompilia—in their dreams, 1115  
 Nor bore the secular sword in vain—asleep.  
 Just so the Archbishop and all good like him  
 Went to bed meaning to pour oil and wine  
 I’ the wounds of her, next day,—but long ere day,  
 They had burned the one and drunk the other, while  
 Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest 1121  
 Sustained poor Nature in extremity

By stuffing barley-bread into her mouth,  
 Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)  
 By the plain homely and straightforward way 1125  
 Taught him by common sense. Let others shriek  
 " Oh what refined expedients did we dream  
 " Proved us the only fit to help the fair ! "  
 He cried " A carriage waits, jump in with me ! "

And now, this application pardoned, lords,— 1130  
 This recreative pause and breathing-while,—  
 Back to beseemingness and gravity !  
 For Law steps in : Guido appeals to Law,  
 Demands she arbitrate,—does well for once.  
 O Law, of thee how neatly was it said 1135  
 By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy seat  
 I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier throned !  
 Here is a piece of work now, hitherto  
 Begun and carried on, concluded near,  
 Without an eye-glance cast thy sceptre's way ; 1140  
 And, lo the stumbling and discomfiture !  
 Well may you call them " lawless " means, men take  
 To extricate themselves through mother-wit

When tangled haply in the toils of life !  
Guido would try conclusions with his foe, 1145  
Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the offence ;  
He would recover certain dowry-dues :  
Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,  
What pother of sword drawn and pistol cocked,  
What peddling with forged letters and paid spies, 1150  
Politick circumvention !—all to end  
As it began—by loss of the fool's head,  
First in a figure, presently in a fact.  
It is a lesson to mankind at large.  
How other were the end, would men be sage 1155  
And bear confidingly each quarrel straight,  
O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees !  
How would the children light come and prompt go,  
This, with a red-cheeked apple for reward,  
The other, peradventure red-cheeked too 1160  
I' the rear, by taste of birch for punishment.  
No foolish brawling murder any more !  
Peace for the household, practice for the Fisc,  
And plenty for the exchequer of my lords !  
Too much to hope, in this world : in the next, 1165

Who knows? Since, why should sit the Twelve enthroned  
 To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be judged?  
 And 't is impossible but offences come:  
 So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-day!

Forgive me this digression—that I stand 1170  
 Entranced awhile at Law's first beam, outbreak  
 O' the business, when the Count's good angel bade  
 "Put up thy sword, born enemy to the ear,  
 "And let Law listen to thy difference!"  
 And Law does listen and compose the strife, 1175  
 Settle the suit, how wisely and how well!  
 On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,  
 Law bends a brow maternally severe,  
 Implies the worth of perfect chastity,  
 By fancying the flaw she cannot find. 1180  
 Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor harms:  
 'T is safe to censure levity in youth,  
 Tax womanhood with indiscretion, sure!  
 Since toys, permissible to-day, become  
 Follies to-morrow: prattle shocks in church: 1185  
 And that curt skirt which lets a maiden skip,

The matron changes for a trailing robe.  
 Mothers may aim a blow with half-shut eyes  
 Nodding above their spindles by the fire,  
 And chance to hit some hidden fault, else safe. 1190  
 Just so, Law hazarded a punishment—  
 If applicable to the circumstance,  
 Why, well! if not so apposite, well too.  
 “Quit the gay range o’ the world,” I hear her cry,  
 “Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound : 1195  
 “Exchange the gauds of pomp for ashes, dust!  
 “Leave each mollitious haunt of luxury!  
 “The golden-garnished silken-couched alcove,  
 “The many-columned terrace that so tempts  
 “Feminine soul put foot forth, extend ear 1200  
 “To fluttering joy of lover’s serenade,—  
 “Leave these for cellular seclusion! mask  
 “And dance no more, but fast and pray! avaunt—  
 “Be burned, thy wicked townsman’s sonnet-book!  
 “Welcome, mild hymnal by . . . some better scribe!  
 “For the warm arms, were wont enfold thy flesh, 1206  
 “Let wire-shirt plough and whip-cord discipline!”  
 If such an exhortation proved, perchance,



Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste,  
 What harm, since law has store, can spend nor miss?

And so, our paragon submits herself, 1211

Goes at command into the holy house,

And, also at command, comes out again :

For, could the effect of such obedience prove

Too certain, too immediate? Being healed, 1215

Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed one!

Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily vacate

The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda free

To patients plentifully posted round,

Since the whole need not the physician! Brief, 1220

She may betake her to her parents' place.

Welcome her, father, with wide arms once more,

Motion her, mother, to thy breast again!

For why? Since Law relinquishes the charge,

Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's style, 1225

Rejoice you with Pompilia! golden days,

*Redeunt Saturnia regna.* Six weeks slip,

And she is domiciled in house and home

As though she thence had never budged at all.

And thither let the husband,—joyous, ay, 1230  
 But contrite also—quick betake himself,  
 Proud that his dove which lay among the pots  
 Hath mued those dingy feathers,—moulted now,  
 Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold !  
 So shall he tempt her to the perch she fled, 1235  
 Bid to domestic bliss the truant back.

But let him not delay ! Time fleets how fast,  
 And opportunity, the irrevocable,  
 Once flown will flout him ! Is the furrow traced ?  
 If field with corn ye fail preoccupy, 1140  
 Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for grain,  
*Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,*  
 Will grow apace in combination prompt,  
 Defraud the husbandman of his desire.  
 Already—hist—what murmurs 'monish now 1245  
 The laggard ?—doubtful, nay, fantastic bruit  
 Of such an apparation, such return  
*Interdum,* to anticipate the spouse,  
 Of Caponsacchi's very self ! 'T is said,  
 When nights are lone and company is rare, 1250

His visitations brighten winter up.  
 If so they did—which nowise I believe—  
 (How can I?—proof abounding that the priest,  
 Once fairly at his relegation-place  
 Never once left it) still, admit he stole 1255  
 A midnight march, would fain see friend again,  
 Find matter for instruction in the past,  
 Renew the old adventure in such chat  
 As cheers a fireside! He was lonely too,  
 He, too, must need his recreative hour. 1260  
 Shall it amaze the philosophic mind  
 If one, was wont the empurpled cup to quaff,  
 Have feminine society at will,  
 Being debarred abruptly from all drink  
 Save at the spring which Adam used for wine, 1265  
 Dreads harm to just the health he hoped to guard,  
 And, meaning abstinence, gains malady?  
 Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope!  
 “Little by little break”—(I hear he bids  
 Master Arcangeli my antagonist, 1270  
 Who loves good cheer, and may indulge too much:  
 So I explain the logic of the plea

Wherewith he opened our proceedings late)—

“ Little by little break a habit, Don,

“ Become necessity to feeble flesh ! ” 1275

And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse

(Which never happened,—but, suppose it did)

May have been used to dishabituate

By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs

O’ the draught of conversation,—heady stuff, 1280

Brewage which, broached, it took two days and  
nights

To properly discuss i’ the journey, Sirs !

Such power has second-nature, men call use,

That undelightful objects get to charm

Instead of chafe : the daily colocynth 1285

Tickles the palate by repeated dose,

Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes a push

Although the mill-yoke-wound be smarting yet,

For mill-door bolted on a holiday :

Nor must we marvel here if impulse urge 1290

To talk the old story over now and then,

The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the haste,—

Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once.

" Here did you bid me twine a rosy wreath !"  
 " And there you paid my lips a compliment !" 1295  
 " Here you admired the tower could be so tall !"  
 " And there you likened that of Lebanon  
 " To the nose of the beloved !" Trifles ! still,  
 " *Forsan et hæc olim,*"—such trifles serve  
 To make the minutes pass in winter-time. 1300

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee !  
 For, finally, of all glad circumstance  
 Should make a prompt return imperative,  
 What in the world awaits thee, dost suppose ?  
 O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont befall, 1305  
 What is the hap of our unconscious Count ?  
 That which lights bonfire and sets cask a-tilt,  
 Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.  
 O admirable, there is born a babe,  
 A son, an heir, a Franceschini last 1310  
 And best o' the stock ! Pompilia, thine the palm !  
 Repaying incredulity with faith,  
 Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt  
 With bounty in profuse expenditure,

Pompilia scorns to have the old year end 1315  
 Without a present shall ring in the new—  
 Bestows on her too-parsimonious lord  
 An infant for the apple of his eye,  
 Core of his heart, and crown completing life,  
 True *summum bonum* of the earthly lot ! 1320  
 “ We,” saith ingeniously the sage, “ are born  
 “ Solely that others may be born of us.”  
 So, father, take thy child, for thine that child,  
 Oh nothing doubt ! In wedlock born, law holds  
 Baseness impossible : since “ *filius est* 1325  
*Quem nuptiæ demonstrant,*” twits the text  
 Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares !

O faith where art thou flown from out the world?  
 Already on what an age of doubt we fall ! 1330  
 Instead of each disputing for the prize,  
 The babe is bandied here from that to this.  
 Whose the babe ? “ *Cujum pecus ?* ” Guido’s lamb ?  
 “ *An Melibœi ?* ” Nay, but of the priest !  
 “ *Non sed Ægonis !* ” Someone must be sire : 1335

And who shall say, in such a puzzling strait,  
 If there were not vouchsafed some miracle  
 To the wife who had been harassed and abused  
 More than enough by Guido's family  
 For non-production of the promised fruit 1340  
 Of marriage? What if Nature, I demand,  
 Touched to the quick by taunts upon her sloth,  
 Had roused herself, put forth recondite power,  
 Bestowed this birth to vindicate her sway,  
 Like the strange favour, Maro memorized 1345  
 As granted Aristæus when his hive  
 Lay empty of the swarm? not one more bee—  
 Not one more babe to Franceschini's house!  
 And lo, a new birth filled the air with joy,  
 Sprung from the bowels of the generous steer, 1350  
 A novel son and heir rejoiced the Count!  
 Spontaneous generation, need I prove  
 Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch?  
 Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair certain weeks,  
 In water, there will be produced a snake; 1355  
 Spontaneous product of the horse, which horse  
 Happens to be the representative—

Now that I think on 't—of Arezzo's self,  
 The very city our conception blessed :  
 Is not a prancing horse the City-arms? 1360  
 What sane eye fails to see coincidence?  
*Cur ego*, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,  
*Desperem fieri sine conjugē*  
*Mater*—how well the Ovidian distich suits!—  
*Et parere intacto dummodo* 1365  
*Casta viro?* a miracle was wrought!  
 Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,  
 The babe in question neither took the name  
 Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor  
 Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but 1370  
 Gaetano—last saint of our hierarchy,  
 And newest namer for a thing so new!  
 What other motive could have prompted choice?

Therefore be peace again: exult, ye hills!  
 Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song! 1375  
*Incipe, parve puer*, begin, small boy,  
*Risu cognoscere patrem*, with a laugh  
 To recognize thy parent! Nor do thou



Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace !

*Nec anceps hære, pater, puero* 1380

*Cognoscendo*—one may well eke out the prayer !

In vain ! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes,

Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive.

Because his house is swept and garnished now,

He, having summoned seven like himself, 1385

Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,

And make the last worse than the first, indeed !

Is he content ? We are. No further blame

O' the man and murder ! They were stigmatized

Befittingly : the Court heard long ago 1390

My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,

Has long since swept like surge, i' the simile

Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,

And whelmed alike client and advocate :

His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone, 1395

On him I am not tempted to waste word.

Yet though my purpose holds,—which was and is

And solely shall be to the very end,

To draw the true *effigies* of a saint,

Do justice to perfection in the sex,— 1400

Yet let not some gross pamperer of the flesh  
 And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,  
 Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit  
 Rather than law,—he never had, to lose—

Let not such advocate object to me

1405

I leave my proper function of attack !

“ What's this to Bacchus ? ”—(in the classic phrase,  
 Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.

O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make  
 Their blessing void—*beati pauperes !*

1410

By painting saintship I depicture sin :

Beside my pearl, I prove how black thy jet,  
 And, through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's crime.

Back to her, then,—with but one beauty more,

End we our argument,—one crowning grace

1415

Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.

For to the last Pompilia played her part,

Used the right means to the permissible end,

And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud

Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,

1420

She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,  
 Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,  
 Whereby she told her story to the world,  
 Enabled me to make the present speech, 1425  
 And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last,  
 Gurgle its choaked remonstrance : snake, hiss free !  
 Oh, that 's the objection? And to whom?—not her  
 But me, forsooth—as, in the very act 1430  
 Of both confession and (what followed close)  
 Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,  
 Babble to sympathizing he and she  
 Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—  
 As this were found at variance with my tale, 1435  
 Falsified all I have adduced for truth,  
 Admitted not one peccadillo here,  
 Pretended to perfection, first and last,  
 O' the whole procedure—perfect in the end,  
 Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything, 1440  
 Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,  
 Reason away and show his skill about !

—A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,  
 Just to be fancied, scarcely to be wished,  
 And, anyhow, unpleadable in court ! 1445  
 “ How reconcile ” gasps Malice “ that with this ? ”

Your “ this,” friend, is extraneous to the law,  
 Comes of men’s outside meddling, the unskilled  
 Interposition of such fools as press  
 Out of their province. Must I speak my mind ? 1450  
 Far better had Pompilia died o’ the spot  
 Than found a tongue to wag and shame the law,  
 Shame most of all herself,—could friendship fail,  
 And advocacy lie less on the alert :  
 But no, they shall protect her to the end ! 1455  
 Do I credit the alleged narration ? No !  
 Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself ?  
 Still, no ! Clear up what seems discrepancy ?  
 The means abound : art ’s long, though time is short ;  
 So, keeping me in compass, all I urge 1460  
 Is—since, confession at the point of death,  
*Nam in articulo mortis*, with the Church  
 Passes for statement honest and sincere,

*Nemo presumitur reus esse*,—then,  
 If sure that all affirmed would be believed, 1465  
 'T was charity, in her so circumstanced,  
 To spend the last breath in one effort more  
 For universal good of friend and foe :  
 And,—by pretending utter innocence,  
 Nay, freedom from each foible we forgive,— 1470  
 Re-integrate—not solely her own fame,  
 But do the like kind office for the priest  
 Whom telling the crude truth about might vex,  
 Haply expose to peril, abbreviate  
 Indeed the long career of usefulness 1475  
 Presumably before him : while her lord,  
 Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law,—  
 What mercy to the culprit if, by just  
 The gift of such a full certificate  
 Of his immitigable guiltiness, 1480  
 She stifled in him the absurd conceit  
 Of murder as it were a mere revenge  
 —Stopped confirmation of that jealousy  
 Which, did she but acknowledge the first flaw,  
 The faintest foible, had emboldened him 1485

To battle with the charge, baulk penitence,  
 Bar preparation for impending fate !  
 Whereas, persuade him that he slew a saint  
 Who sinned not even where she may have sinned,  
 You urge him all the brisklier to repent 1490  
 Of most and least and aught and everything !  
 Still, if this view of mine content you not,  
 Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood here,  
 We come to our *Triarii*, last resource :  
 We fall back on the inexpugnable, 1495  
 Submitting,—she confessed before she talked !  
 The sacrament obliterates the sin :  
 What is not,—was not, therefore, in a sense.  
 Let Molinists distinguish, “Souls washed white  
 “But red once, still show pinkish to the eye !” 1500  
 We say, abolishment is nothingness,  
 And nothingness has neither head nor tail,  
 End nor beginning ! Better estimate  
 Exorbitantly, than disparage aught  
 Of the efficacy of the act, I hope ! 1505

*Solvuntur tabulæ?* May we laugh and go ?

Well,—not before (in filial gratitude  
 To Law, who, mighty mother, waves adieu)  
 We take on us to vindicate Law's self !  
 For,—yea, Sirs,—curb the start, curtail the stare !—  
 Remains that we apologize for haste 1511  
 I' the Law, our lady who here bristles up  
 “ Blame my procedure ? Could the Court mistake ?  
 “ (Which were indeed a misery to think)  
 “ Did not my sentence in the former stage 1515  
 “ O' the business bear a title plain enough ?  
 “ *Decretum* ”—I translate it word for word—  
 “ ‘ Decreed : the priest, for his complicity  
 “ ‘ I' the flight and deviation of the dame,  
 “ ‘ As well as for unlawful intercourse, 1520  
 “ ‘ Is banished three years :’ crime and penalty,  
 “ Declared alike. If he be taxed with guilt,  
 “ How can you call Pompilia innocent ?  
 “ If both be innocent, have I been just ? ”

Gently, O mother, judge men—whose mistake 1525  
 Is in the mere misapprehensiveness !  
 The *Titulus* a-top of your decree

Was but to ticket there the kind of charge  
 You in good time would arbitrate upon.  
 Title is one thing,—arbitration's self, 1530  
*Probatio*, quite another possibly.  
*Subsistit*, there holds good the old response,  
*Responsio tradita*, we must not stick,  
*Quod non sit attendendus Titulus*,  
 To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but the Proof, 1535  
*Resultans ex processu*, the result  
 O' the Trial, and the style of punishment,  
*Et pœna per sententiam imposita*.  
 All is tentative, till the sentence come :  
 An indication of what men expect, 1540  
 But nowise an assurance they shall find.  
 Lords, what if we permissibly relax  
 The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus bids,  
 Relieve our gravity at labour's close ?  
 I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a draught, 1545  
 Look for a wine-shop, find it by the bough  
 Projecting as to say " Here wine is sold !"  
 So much I know,—" sold : " but what sort of wine ?  
 Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made or foreign drink ?



That much must I discover by myself. 1550

“Wine is sold,” quoth the bough, “but good or  
bad,

“Find, and inform us when you smack your lips!”

Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,

To show she entertains you with such case

About such crime. Come in! she pours, you quaff.

You find the Priest good liquor in the main, 1556

But heady and provocative of brawls :

Remand the residue to flask once more,

Lay it low where it may deposit lees,

I' the cellar : thence produce it presently, 1560

Three years the brighter and the better !

Thus,

Law's son, have I bestowed my filial help,

And thus I end, *tenax proposito* ;

Point to point as I purposed have I drawn 1565

Pompilia, and implied as terribly

Guido : so, gazing, let the world crown Law—

Able once more, despite my impotence,

And helped by the acumen of the Court,

---

To eliminate, display, make triumph truth ! 1570  
What other prize than truth were worth the pains ?

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There's my oration—much exceeds in length  
That famed panegyric of Isocrates,  
They say it took him fifteen years to pen.  
But all those ancients could say anything ! 1575  
He put in just what rushed into his head :  
While I shall have to prune and pare and print.  
This comes of being born in modern times  
With priests for auditory. Still, it pays.

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,  
OLD BAILEY, E.C.







EN 10.5.73

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